


STAR DRIVE

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ALIEN COMPENDIUM 2

ACCESSORY



Exploration of 2503

Z
Science Fiction
Roleplaying Game

William W. Connors, Steven Schend, and JD Wiker

STRIP DRIVE™

ALIEN

The Exploration of 2503

COMPENDIUM™ 2

ACCESSORY



U.S., CANADA, ASIA,
PACIFIC, & LATIN AMERICA
Wizards of the Coast, Inc.
P.O. Box 707
Renton, WA 98057-0707
+1-800-324-6496



EUROPEAN HEADQUARTERS
Wizards of the Coast, Belgium
P.B. 2031
2600 Berchem
Belgium
+32-70-23-32-77

Visit our website at www.wizards.com

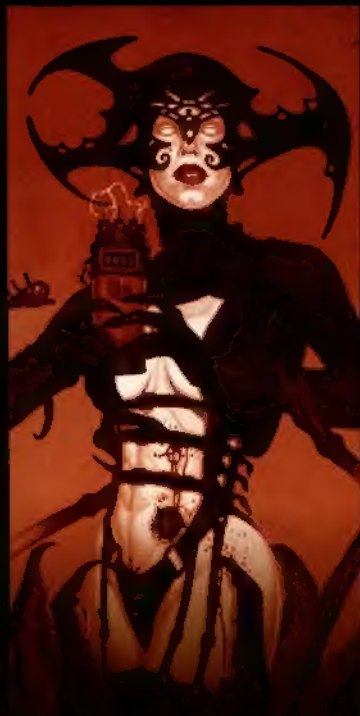
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CREDITS

Design: William W. Connors, Steven Schend, and JD Wiker • **Editing:** Miranda Horner and Julia Martin • **Cover Artist:** RK Post • **Interior Artists:** Monte Michael Moore, Ben Thompson, Nicholas Jainschigg, Scott Lewis, and Lars Grant West • **Cartographer:** Rob Lazzaretti • **Typesetter:** Angelika Lokotz • **Graphic Designers:** Dee Barnett, Matt Adelsperger and Sean Glenn • **Creative Director:** Richard Baker • **Art Director:** Paul Hanchette

Based on the **ALTERNITY®** rules created by Bill Slavicek and Richard Baker.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern science may debate the existence of life on other worlds, but in the STAR^{DRIVE}® universe, alien creatures undeniably exist on thousands of known worlds. Like the first ALIEN COMPENDIUM™ volume, this book details a small sampling of the potential forms of life that dwell in the frontierlike reaches of the Verge. What lies beyond the Verge is still anyone's guess.

This book makes no claim to being an authority on the subject of xenology, but we have tried to avoid contradicting known scientific facts. Readers should still bear in mind that this book is science fiction and that extrapolating possibilities is a hallmark of science fiction.

From the last known journal entries of
Dr. Aliaz Veras, University of Ceres:

Despite the rigors of our last xenological expedition and how glad we were when it was finally done, we have found that every new species discovered engenders an overwhelming desire to go out and discover just one more. Had our funding not materialized so easily, we would have no doubt bankrupted ourselves to visit one more world, to round one more corner, to turn over one more rock, to discover one more species and say, "Greetings." And we would have gladly bankrupted our children and their children had that alien species returned our salutation.

We have changed and grown since our first momentous journey to the Verge, but the primary constant that defined our mission has not: The majority of the galaxy is still a lifeless desert. Even so, thousands and thousands of worlds remain where life has gained a foothold in the uncaring waste. However, we knew when we began that the chances of making contact with one new and nonhostile sentient species would be slim. That we have encountered so many species—the blix, the evrem, gardhyi, the sinister kroath, and the rapacious clicks (collectively, the Externals)—begs a simple question: why?

The prevailing theory aboard the *Kepler* is that the area known to the Galactic Concord as the Lightning Nebula is the equivalent of the Verge to a collection or perhaps a coalition of a species that lies somewhere on the far side of the nebula. Despite the chilly reception the Concord received at Hammer's Star so many years ago, a considerably more civilized group of aliens may await us beyond the gauntlet of hazards we have already encountered. In time, the Verge and even the harrowing Lightning Nebula might become little more than a corridor for traffic with each inhabited system functioning as wayside hostel on a busy highway. The goal that drives us now is the fervent desire to facilitate in some small way a peaceful communion with that other empire and to bring to an end the vicious confrontation facing us now.

What You Need to Play

This product can be adapted to any science fiction system you would like to use it with, but the statistics given here use the ALTERNITY science fiction game. You'll need the ALTERNITY® *Player's Handbook* and *Gamemaster Guide* in order if use the entries as they are written. In addition, the ALIEN COMPENDIUM 2 volume is set in the Verge, which is a region of space that is part of the STAR^{DRIVE} campaign setting.

Presentation

This book is organized by systems and worlds. Each world entry describes the most intriguing creatures encountered by the Concord Survey Vessel *Kepler* during its second biological survey cruise in 2503. The systems are arranged in the order that the *Kepler* visited them (Aegis to the Lightning Nebula).

On this voyage, the *Kepler* traveled even farther afield, risking encounters with hostile alien forces to learn more about the peaceful denizens of the Lightning Nebula. Concord Administrator Ruden Grant and Dr. Alisiz Veras also explored a number of worlds previously deemed too far off the path and discovered new species, and in one or two cases, new civilizations.

Ruden Grant is a direct, uncompromising human male in his thirties. He sees issues in black and white terms. He led the expedition. Alisiz Veras is a brilliant female faal biologist/xenologist with a pas-

sion for her work. She led the expedition's biological survey team. She can be quite a firebrand but has also developed a diplomatic manner that she can assume. She achieved this through years of courting financial backers for her work. (Complete game statistics for Administrator Grant and Dr. Veras are available in *ALIEN COMPENDIUM: Systems of the Verge*.)

The entries in this book represent data compiled from the notes of all members of the survey team with editorial comments appended by Grant ("BG, CLA" in the text) and Veras ("AV, CSS" in the text). Some of this information includes facts that a *StarDrive* Gamemaster needs that are still unknown to the sentients of the Verge or the Stellar Ring. These new pieces of information may become known at the Gamemaster's discretion due to the actions of the heroes or other adventurers.

The Worlds

The great majority of worlds are lifeless, and many that do boast life of some kind support only the rudimentary algae and microorganisms. Lifeless worlds and those containing nothing more interesting than organic soup are not included here.

We've provided brief descriptions of each world mentioned in this compendium, including basic astronomical and geophysical data. Each of the data categories is defined below.

Parent: Usually, the name and spectral class of the parent star of the planet. If the world being described is a satellite of a planet, then the planet is identified as its parent, and the star and spectral class are given thereafter in parentheses. Spectral class is a measure of a star's size and temperature.

Orbital Radius: The distance at which the world orbits its parent, given in astronomical units (AU) for a planet and in kilometers (km) a satellite of a planet. If the parent is a planet, then the distance of that planet from its parent star is also given.

Orbital Period: How long it takes for the planet or satellite to orbit its parent once (one year). If the parent is a planet, then the time it takes for the planet to make one revolution around its parent star is also given.

Rotation Period: How long it takes the planet or satellite to complete a full rotation around its axis (one day).

Axial Tilt: The degree of the world's inclination to the plane of its orbit about the sun. This affects the severity of the planet's seasons, the latitude at which the arctic and antarctic circles appear, and the latitude band of the planet's tropics. The value is generalized:

minimal (0° to 10°), moderate (11° to 25°), severe (26° to 45°), or extreme (46° or more). A world an axial tilt of more than 90° is rotating in a retrograde motion (backward) relative to the rest of the worlds in the system.

Diameter: The diameter of the world in kilometers. Earth is roughly 12,700 kilometers in diameter.

Density: The density of the world expressed as a ratio to the density of the Earth (Earth=1).

Surface Gravity: The world's surface gravity expressed in g, where 1.0 g is the average surface gravity of Earth. On a 2.0 g world, objects are twice as heavy as they are on Earth's surface.

Atmosphere: The primary constituents of the world's atmosphere. For comparison, Earth's atmosphere is a mix of molecular nitrogen and oxygen (N₂ and O₂) with a few less common gases mixed in.

Pressure: The average atmospheric pressure as measured at the world's surface in atmospheres (atm). One atm equals the pressure of the Earth's atmosphere at sea level.

Median Temperature: The midpoint between the hottest and coldest temperatures found on the planet's surface, expressed in degrees Celsius. Earth's median temperature is 15.8° C, or about 60° F.

Satellites: If the world has any significant satellites (moons), the number of these bodies is noted here.

GRAPH: This line describes the five principal attributes of a planetary environment in the GRAPH system, as described in the *Player's Handbook* (Chapter 3: Heroes in Action) and the *Gamemaster's Guide* (Chapter 3: Gamemasters in Action).



Creatures

Each world entry is subdivided into entries for species native to the planet. Only the most dangerous or exotic denizens of each world are presented here.

Ecological Data

This section describes some of the basics about the creature and its place in its world. It explains at a glance the type of lifeform described in the entry. Some of this information is simply the best guesses of the members of the expedition, so it may not be completely accurate.

Biochemistry: To date, six basic biochemistry models or series have been found to exist in the galaxy. Most lifeforms require a liquid medium to carry out life-sustaining chemical reactions and some kind of reagent for cellular respiration. In addition, their bodies require compounds or elements that can create very complex organic molecules. Dr. Veras preferred the Hendricks classifications, which are given below.

Series	Medium	Reagent	Structure	Environ.
I	Water	Oxygen	Carbon	Class 1, 2
II	Ammonia	Hydrogen	Hydrocarbons	Class 3
III	Water	Chlorine	Carbon	Class 2, 3
IV	SO ₂	SO ₃	Carbon	Class 3
V	H ₂ SO ₄	Oxygen	Silicones	Class 3
VI	Sulfur	SO ₂	Fluorosilicones	Class 3, 5
VII	???	???	???	???

Series I: This type of life is carbon-based oxygen breathers. It is the most common life series. Series I lifeforms inhabit Class 1 (Terrestrial) environments. Heat- or cold-tolerant variations may inhabit less hospitable planets.

Series II: Series II life develops on cold worlds (anywhere from -50 to -150° C) in diluted ammonia oceans. Technological civilizations are nearly impossible on planets conducive to Series II life due to the lack of fire. Worlds that support Series II life are usually Class 3 environments.

Series III: Similar in many respects to Series I life, Series III lifeforms appear on worlds where chlorine (or more rarely, fluorine) is dominant in the atmosphere. Chlorine is not nearly as efficient a reagent as oxygen, so most Series III lifeforms develop mechanisms for gathering additional organic fuels. Technological civilizations are scarce on Series III worlds due to the flame-retardant air. Depending on the concentration of chlorine, worlds with these ecosystems are Class 2 or 3 environments.

Series IV: Series IV life is based on sulfur dioxide and sulfur trioxide. These worlds tend to be cool (-50° C or colder) with lots of surface sulfur. The lack of free oxygen in the atmosphere eliminates fire and makes many technologies inaccessible. Since there is no free oxygen, these are Class 3 worlds.

Series V: This is an unusual but highly efficient biochemistry that uses sulfuric acid as a medium. Since carbon compounds don't do well in this environment, lifeforms use silicones (silicon-oxygen chains) as organic molecules. These worlds tend to be warmer than Earth (50 to 200° C) and may be considered Class 3 or Class 5 environments depending on the atmospheric density. Metal-using civilizations are possible in the right conditions.

Series VI: Creatures of this sort are the most heat-tolerant life series and thrive in molten sulfur. Cell-like structures in their bodies are based on fluorosilicones, which can form stable compounds at high temperatures. These worlds are very hot (300° C or more) and are considered Class 3 or Class 5 environments. Fire and metallurgy may be irrelevant to these lifeforms.

Series VII: Anything that doesn't fit into the biochemistries described above is referred to as Series VII life. To date, very few Series VII organisms have been discovered.

Environment: The creature's native environment class with special conditions noted. Most life support gear is rated by the maximum environment class it can protect its wearer against.

Class	Description
1 Terrestrial	Habitable
2 Minimal	Minor life support required due to climatic extremes, atmospheric conditions, etc.
3 Extreme	Major life support required due to intolerable climate or atmosphere
4 Space	Including asteroids, rings, etc.
5 Jovian	Extreme life support required

Each of these five basic environment classes can be further detailed by adding GRAPH codes to them for special conditions that vary significantly from the norms observed on the Earth's surface. GRAPH codes are further described in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Gamemaster Guide*.

Gravity	Radiation	Atmosphere Composition
Zero (G0)	Zero (R0)	Vacuum (A0)
Low (G1)	Low (R1)	Inert (A1)
Moderate (G2)	Moderate (R2)	Moderate (A2)
High (G3)	High (R3)	Toxic (A3)
Very high (G4)	Extreme (R4)	Corrosive (A4)
Super high (G5)	Lethal (R5)	Super corrosive (A5)

Pressure	Heat and Cold
Vacuum (P0)	Absolute zero (H0)
Very thin (P1)	Frigid (H1)
Thin (P2)	Temperate (H2)
Moderate (P3)	Torrid (H3)
Dense (P4)	Super torrid (H4)
Crushing (P5)	Interno (H5)

Biome: While a world may be described by only a single environmental class, most planets possess multiple biomes. Therefore, an Earthlike planet (Class 1 environment) may have arctic, desert, jungle, plains, or steppe biomes. Typically, a species is found in the biome that best suits it.

Encounter Chance: This is a rough guideline for how often the creature may be encountered on its homeworld and in its biome.

Category	Likelihood	d20 Roll
Probable	75%	1-15
Possible	50%	1-10
Unlikely	25%	1-5
Sliver	10%	1-2



On this table, "Likelihood" is an estimate in percentage terms of the chance for characters to come across the creature by happenstance. The "d20 Roll" gives a range of numbers that is used for random determination. It should result within the given range indicates that an encounter occurs. If heroes are searching for a type of creature, the chance of an encounter could be adjusted upward. If heroes are seeking to avoid contact with other lifeforms, the encounter chance might be smaller. How often the encounter chance for a creature comes into play is up to the Gamemaster. For a strictly random determination, pick a time unit (usually hours or days), and roll d20 whenever that much time passes in the game. It's often best, though, to let the situation dictate what happens.

Group Size: The number range given here indicates how many creatures are usually encountered at once. (An optional die roll is given in parentheses for random generation.)

Organization: The social structure displayed by the creature in its native environment. Examples include packs, pods, flocks, schools, herds, and so on for non-sentient creatures. For intelligent creatures, the characteristic reflects the basic level of civilization or organization: tribal, rural, urbanized, city-states, national, and so forth.

Niche: The creature's role in the regional ecosystem, such as herbivore, carnivore, etc. The basic subsistence system of intelligent creatures is noted in this heading.

Intelligence: A crucial characteristic in dealing with an alien species, intelligence is categorized as none, low-order animal, high-order animal, sub-sentient, or sentient. Following are rough guidelines for how a creature of a certain intelligence acts:

None: The creature is incapable of reasoning or communication, at least in terms that humans can perceive or relate to.

Low-order Animal: The creature has an Intelligence score of 1 or 2. It is incapable of communicating with creatures of other species but can interact on a primitive level with other creatures of its own species. It can make the most fundamental decisions, but its actions when doing so appear random and mindless to an outside observer.

High-order Animal: The creature has an Intelligence score of 3 or 4. It realizes when a creature of another species tries to communicate with it, but it may not possess the means (physical or mental) to respond. If the creature has appendages or muscles it can manipulate, it can convey information by flexing the manipulable part. Individually and when acting in a group, these creatures employ rudimentary tactics against prey or opponents.

Sub-sentient: The typical creature has an Intelligence score of 5 or 6. Its communication skills are developed well enough that it has a language, but its language's nuances are perceptible only to others of the same species. Using gestures, vocal emissions, or a combination of the two, the creature can convey broad concepts so that they are understood by sentients. A sub-sentient creature is intelligent enough to use simple tools and weapons but may lack the physical means to manipulate such objects. Many sub-sentients possess one or more Intelligence-based skills and may even have a low rank to a specialty skill. The intelligence skills they are capable of knowing include Knowledge—deduce, Knowledge—first aid, Tactics—infantry, and Technical Science—repair.

Sentient: The typical creature has an Intelligence score of 7 or higher. This category includes all species capable of independent thought, sophisticated reasoning, and detailed cognitive processes. A sentient creature is mindful of its own identity and its own existence and behaves accordingly. It may still fight to the death, just as an animal or a sub-sentient might, but it knows what it is doing and why. Sentient creatures may learn and improve any Intelligence-based skill, although some skills may not be available in certain situations.

Game Data

The key entries for using the alien in play are its game statistics. The game statistics provided in this book represent an average specimen of the species. Unusual individuals may be larger, faster, stronger, or smarter.

Ability Scores: All creatures are given a rough rating in the six ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Will, Personality) to approximate their capabilities on a human scale. You may roll the scores randomly using the die range provided, or you can use the default values that are provided.

For creatures belonging to the Intelligence categories of low-order animal and high-order animal, the parenthetical Ability Score values and ranges for Intelligence and Personality are preceded by the word "Animal." In such cases, the given numbers represent how the creature's abilities compare to those of other creatures in those intelligence categories.

Durability: The amount of punishment a typical member of this species can withstand—numbers for fatigue, stun, wound, and mortal points separated by slashes. A creature's durability rating is usually tied to its Constitution, although exceptionally bulky or tough creatures may have better ratings than their Constitution scores suggest.

Move: The alien's combat movement rates (with other modes of movement, when applicable, given in parentheses). Often these rates are different from what is indicated by a creature's Strength and Dexterity due to its body structure, metabolism, or other factors.

Reaction Score: If you want to dispense with die rolls to determine a creature's action check result, use its reaction score instead. The degree of success (Marginal, Ordinary, or Good) indicates the first phase in which the creature can act, and the number following the slash is how many actions it receives per round.

Psionic Energy Points: If the creature has psionic abilities, its maximum number of psionic energy points is given here.

Action Check: The creature's action check score. These numbers are not always based on its Dexterity and Intelligence, as is the case for heroes; some mindless creatures may be very swift.

#Actions: The number of actions the creature receives per round. Again, this figure isn't always derived from the alien's Will and Constitution scores. It's more a measure of fighting instinct.

Last Resorts: The number of last resort points a creature is entitled to have, usually based on its Personality score. This category applies only to sub-sentient and sentient creatures.

Attacks: The alien's natural attacks are listed here using the following format:

Mode	Skill Score	Damage (D/G/A)	Type
Claw	16/8/4	2d4s/2d6w/d4m	L/O

Defenses: The alien's resistance modifiers versus melee attacks (Strength-based) and ranged attacks (Dexterity-based) appear here, as well as its natural armor (if any). For sentient and sub-sentient creatures, this section also includes Intelligence and Will resistance modifiers that may come into play if encounter skills are employed against the creature.

Skills: Any skills an alien possesses are noted here. Even though their Intelligence scores might not technically permit them to have the number of skills attributed to them, many creatures of animal-level intelligence have innate physical attributes that correspond to particular skills. The numbers in brackets following each skill are the skill scores for a typical creature of the species in question. If a particular creature has any Ability Scores different from the ones given for a typical specimen, any skill scores associated with those Ability Scores must be adjusted accordingly.

CSS CONTACT PROTOCOLS

While the stellar nations deem the Age of Exploration long over, many people, whether independent scouts or members of the Galactic Concord Survey Service (the CSS), still search out unmapped systems. The processes and technologies of scouting a newly discovered system are discussed at length elsewhere (see the *Outbound* sourcebook), but initial survey and contact protocols are covered here. As exemplified in the Cambria and Meriden systems, first contact with systems and lifeforms poses tremendous risks for the foolhardy and the careless. To develop its own, the CSS co-opted older Orion and Rignunmor first contact protocols. Those exploring unknown space need to follow these protocols and use CSS survey forms if they want the Concord to ratify any claims they might make.

Initial Survey

When explorers first fully investigate a system, they need to use ship systems to make system and planetary surveys of increasing detail. Unless starfall occurs very close to the inner system, the time it takes to travel to the nearest planetary body should allow for broad system scans. These scans serve to refine stellar data (size, radiation, etc.) and discern the number of asteroid belts and planetary bodies (including moons) in the system and their distances from the star (or stars).

The CSS recommends a minimum 48 hours of orbit around each orbital body of a stellar system to scan for geological, zoological, and archaeological data. Three scan sequences of increasing efficiency are done of a planet, moon, or hemisphere: one from orbit, another from a lower orbit, and a third from actually within the atmosphere (if one is present) or from very low orbit (if one is not). The outermost scan sequence performs atmospheric tests (temperature, radiation, composition, and pressure) to determine life support necessities and general mapping. It also scans for electromagnetic emissions (radio, microwave, and so forth), especially those that would indicate the presence of a technological society. The second scan sequence checks for heat sources, weather patterns, massive collections of any readily apparent types of botanic or biologic life (such as forests), and provides greater cartographic detail on potential landing sites and any sites identified as intriguing and specifically targeted for enhanced probing. The third scan sequence corroborates the previous data and utilizes the increased wealth of information available at lower altitudes to scan for any signs of life, whether those be heat, movement, obvious visible artificial structures, unusual light or electromagnetic emissions undetectable from a greater distance, and so on.

Any sign of life within initial scans initiates first contact protocols. The CSS mandated both the scan times and protocols for the scan sequences for litigation purposes. The more data in the initial survey, the stronger the legal claim of its surveyors. These scan sequence mandates also increase the likelihood of exploration teams' survival and decrease the incidence of accidental cultural or ecological damage caused by teams inadvertently stumbling across creatures and making broad unfounded assumptions about how they interact with the ecosystem of a planet.

First Contact

When explorers encounter life of any kind, priority goes to accruing basic data on the new lifeform, its ecosystem, and its social system. Of primary importance at this stage is nondisruption of a lifeform's normal behavior patterns and interactions during data collection. Explorers should observe without being observed, and minimize contact with indigenous lifeforms until basic behavior patterns are recorded. They are advised to consider a planet a quarantine zone and every creature or plant a biological danger until proven otherwise. Once explorers collect preliminary ecological data for their survey, they can file claims and survey rights with the CSS and/or other nations. Followup surveys become necessary if the surveyors or their patrons deem the planet appropriate for colonization or diplomatic contact (in the case of a sentient species).



Ecological Data Collection

The *ALIEN COMPENDIUM* series provides the basics of an ecological data survey with each lifeform: the Ecological Data form that accompanies every species. Methods used to collect this data include short-range scans with specialized anthropological, zoological, biological, and medical gauntlets. The complexity and accuracy of the surveys depends entirely on the expertise of those making the scans and the quality of the analysis programs that work the raw data. Most explorers can establish the GHAPH data of planets and lifeforms with proper equipment, but only trained anthropologists or Amazing rank anthroscan programs can determine sentence and interpret social structures and interactions accurately.

Nonsentient to Subsentient Life

Once explorers are certain that creatures are nonintelligent animals and those creatures' patterns of behavior and habitat range are noted, the surveyors should resurvey the planet from a low planetary orbit to determine the extent of the lifeform's viability across the planet by seeking similar biomes visually, chemically, and climatologically. This scan combined with targeted observations in those potential matching biomes helps refine the analysis of a species' range and the scope of its biome or biomes. Any creatures limited to one biome or of a population numbering fewer than 1,000 individuals immediately are categorized as members of an endangered species. With this categorization, they gain certain protections under Concord law.

Finding new lifeforms can be profitable for explorers. Particularly lucrative is the capture and exportation of creatures offplanet for personal zoos or culinary use. Despite this black market for new pets and exotic foods, very few species are ever encountered off their homeworld. Most exceptions are sentients with the adaptability to accept, not disrupt, new biomes and new ecosystems, though accidental introduction of species to nonnative biomes and planets has resulted in some ecological tragedies. Luckily, very few instances of transferring new species to a previously closed ecosystem occur now due to laws enacted and serious administrative restrictions imposed on the transport of live animals and plants after the Meriden IV incidents. After getting loose on the planet, dog packs from the colonists led to the colony's demise and drove eight mammalian species on that planet to extinction.

Tampering with subsentient lifeforms and their development registers as one of the most serious crimes under Concord law. The Concord deems such violation a capital offense in the case of serious infractions. Despite objections by Void-Corp and other stellar nations, the Concord condemns the disruption of any species with rudimentary language and tool-bearing development, broadly interpreting disruption to include most if not all contact. During the early days of Verge exploration, some less scrupulous settlers and claimants settled planets and shared technology with less advanced native sentients on those planets. This behavior led to those species' exploitation. Due to this behavior, planets exist within the Verge where native cultures view the advanced species as deities despite years of reeducation. A few Concord administrators proactively fight such abuses. At least five planets in the Verge have been placed under quarantine to protect them from further exploitation.

Sentient Lifeforms

CSS protocols for encounters with sentient lifeforms are geared to prevent racial subjugation of another—in essence, to forbid what VoidCorp did to the seshayans to happen again. Once surveys find sentient life on a planet, CSS protocols urge explorers to get offplanet

immediately to prevent discovery by the natives. Such planets are quarantined, unavailable for use as resources or to be claimed by any stellar nation or other group without their further investigation. Planets remain under first contact quarantines for at least a year, though some remain quarantined indefinitely. Of course, such policies are only effective if the Concord regulations are followed, and only if the Concord is informed of the planet's inhabitants.

If contact is made (whether by accident, design, or the efforts of the sentient species discovered), diplomats and first contact specialists should be called in to mediate the relations between the visitors and the natives. Some contacts, like that initiated in the Eldale system, go well, and the natives grow into full interaction with the Verge interstellar species. Others do not, such as many presume to be the case at Hammer's Star and Meriden. Such hostile or poorly executed contacts often lead to disruptions of the natural order and the expulsion or death of explorers, mediators, or colonists.

Providing technology to a species that is beyond the species's ability to independently produce is a serious crime. If the Concord detects it, it prosecutes those responsible and strips them and any affiliated concerns of all planetary claims. After investigating initial surveys and claims, the Concord often prevents any interaction with new sentient species (through quarantines) until they reach Gravity Age technology or they can accept the existence of extraterrestrial life without destroying the foundations of their societies (such as in the fraal contact with Earth's 21st-century culture). The Concord frequently builds orbital watchposts above such quarantined planets to study their native lifeforms in hopes that the Concord can share in the planet's resources once its natives can freely choose to allow interaction or not.

Assuming scans do not alert a technologically advanced species of extraterrestrial arrival, contact with an advanced species usually occurs through diplomatic interaction. Common practice places such a planet under watch for at least six months before initiating full contact. Contact with new species in interstellar space speeds up the process, since such contact can only be made with technological equals. However, humanity has only met the medurr this way, though true contact did not occur until months after the initial encounter with the species outside the Lucullus system.



BLUEFALL

My first visit to Bluefall was a high water mark in my exploration of the Verge. I have seen many worlds that purport to be earthly paradises, but none has come close to the mark set by the innermost world of the Angis system. In the days, weeks, and months after I left behind that sapphire globe, I heard its shores calling to me.

In time, I found that alien's song too tempting to resist. Setting aside many demands on my time, I organized a second xenological survey of Bluefall's oceans. Many of my associates chuckled at my plans. They knew of the special place Bluefall held in my heart. More than one of them accused me of mixing business with pleasure.

But the job was on them. I did very little actual business on the trip—Dr. Allice Worme, Concord Survey Services (and University of Corvo).

One doesn't have to look too far in the Verge to find mention of the planet Bluefall. It might be a worn review of the planet's many tourist attractions, a new program featuring an in-depth analysis of the latest political breakthrough, or simply a work of fiction set against the romantic backdrop of this tropical paradise. No matter what the context, one can't escape noticing this exceptional planet. No matter how one looks at it, Bluefall is the single most important planet in the Verge.

With that in mind, it is curious to note how little the average person in the Verge knows about this gleaming jewel. Most people draw their information from the media, usually from works of fiction. They labor under many misconceptions. They imagine isles with white, sandy beaches; the majority of Bluefall's islands have jagged, rocky shores. They envision massive waves thundering ashore and filling the air with salty spray; different locales have different kinds of surf depending on the weather and their geographic configuration (including shallow coastal shelf, atoll, and seamount leading to an island). They describe skies with two large, round moons filling the night sky with a warm radiance, apparently unaware that both of the planet's natural satellites are small asteroidal fragments that look to those on the surface like little more than very bright stars in the sky.

For all this misinformation, the av-

Bluefall

Parent: Aegis (G2/	Density (Earth=1): 0.99
Phantom (M9)	Surface Gravity: 0.89 g
Orbital Radius: 0.97 AU	Atmosphere: N ₂ , O ₂
Orbital Period: 348.8 days	Pressure: 0.89 atm
Rotation Period: 28 hours	Median Temperature: 20° C
Axial Tilt: Minimal (0.1°)	Satellites: Two
Diameter: 11,452 km	GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

erage citizen is right on some points. Bluefall is indeed a world dominated by a massive ocean with only a scattering of volcanic islands thrown in for good measure. And the seas of this ethereal hospitable world are home to an incredible assortment of animals. Some are beautiful and peaceful, gliding beneath the waves with slow, majestic movements. Others are fast and deadly, striking with a speed that brings to mind creatures normally found only in nightmares.

Encounter Notes

It is important that Gamemasters understand the limits of evolution on Bluefall. Although this world is much like Earth, it lacks the land area and diverse biomes of humankind's home-world. Certain forms of life have never appeared on this world.

For example, Bluefall has no native mammals. The most highly evolved land animals are reptiles like the sea scorer described in *ALIEN COMPENDIUM: Creatures of the Verge*.

To flesh out individual campaigns, the following is a list of creatures presented in the *ALTERNITY Gamemaster Guide* that are found on Bluefall. In addition, we give the name by which the creature is known on Bluefall. Gamemasters can also include some of the Terrian creatures from the *Animal Compendium* section of Chapter 17: *Creatures & Aliens* in the *Gamemaster Guide* simply by giving them a new name and keeping their game statistics a secret.

Animal Compendium

Shark
Snake, constrictor¹
Snake, venomous¹
Whale, humpback²

Alien Compendium

Amphibian
Coelenterate
Echinoderm
Mollusk
Nematode
Ophiuran³
Pisces
Trilobite

Bluefall Name

Baker's shark
Sea tangler
Deep fear
Leviathan

Bluefall Name

Fowler's newt
Jason's medusa
Scarlet sea star
Coral bore
Blood worm
Sea ribbon
Tiger fish
Spit crab

¹ Assume that this is an aquatic snake.

² Assume that this is a fish, not a mammal.

Gilded Floater

One of the highlights of my second visit to Bluefall came on a lazy winter evening. I was watching the stars drift across the sky when the water around our boat suddenly boiled to life. One after another, a score of rounded fish popped out of the water and hung in the air like children's balloons. They looked so funny that I couldn't stop myself from laughing. Then, a loud explosion split the night and a ball of flame washed across the deck.—**AV, CSS**

Many species of floater live in the oceans of Bluefall. They range in size from the 35-centimeter-long bubble fish of the southern seas to the 5-meter-long sea zeppelin found near the North Pole. The most common of these is the gilded floater, which is found throughout the planet's temperate and tropical regions.

Description: Gilded floaters are round-bodied fish similar in shape to Terran goldfish. They measure between 1 and 1.5 meters in length and weigh an average of 21 kilograms at adulthood. They are covered with thin, flexible scales that shimmer like soft gold. Their rounded eyes are not particularly sensitive, but lines of specially adapted nerves on their sides detect even the most subtle movements in the water around them. These detectors make it almost impossible to sneak up on a floater.

A special organ works in conjunction with a gilded floater's gills to crack the sea water into hydrogen and oxygen. The hydrogen is

Gilded Floater Ecological Data

Habitat: Surface

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/A1/A2/P3/H2

Biome: Temperate and tropical open saltwater seas

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 20–120 (2d6×10)

Organization: School

Niche: Carnivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

mixed with certain waste gases from the fish's digestive processes and stored in compressed form in an internal reservoir.

When a floater believes itself to be in danger of attack, it inflates two large bladders beneath its oversized pectoral fins. These balloon outward as lighter-than-air gases (primarily hydrogen) fill them. As they expand, the fish is lifted up and out of the water.

Once aloft, the fish is virtually helpless. It can move about only slowly by using its pectoral fins as rudimentary wings. For the most part, it travels where the wind carries it. After about 10 minutes, the fish is forced to deflate its lift bladders and drop back into the water to breathe. It takes 10 minutes for the fish to replace the gas stores it uses to inflate, so it must remain in the water for that time.

Encounter: Although gilded floaters are carnivores, they have never attacked humans. They are timid creatures that are dangerous only in the schools of small fish on which they feed.

Because it is so difficult to sneak up on a gilded floater, they are usually encountered in their inflated, airborne state. Only those who



Gilded Floater Game Data

STR 5	(d4+2)	INT 3	(Animal 5 or d4)
DEX 9	(d4+6)	WIL 10	(d4+2)
CON 8	(d6+4)	PER 3	(Animal 8 or d6+4)
Durability: 9/8/4/4		Action check: 9+/8/4/2	
Move: swim 25/Boat 3		#Actions: 2	
Reaction score: Ordinary/2			

Attacks

Explosion¹ d4e/d6e/d4w En/U

¹ Choose for damage type given in the text. Damage from an explosion is Ordinary from over 2 meters out to 4 meters. Good beyond contact with the fish through 2 meters, and Aftershock on contact with the fish.

Defenses

–1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: none (LI), none (HI), none (EX)

Skills

Acrobatics [9], Stealth [8], Movement [9]—swim [13], Stamina [8]—endurance [9], Awareness [10]—intuition [15], perception [14].



spend a great deal of time working around these creatures learn the tricks of how to approach them without startling them. These patient taw can move freely among a school of swimming floaters.

Though floaters are not vicious, care must be used in the company of an inflated floater. Because the gases used to keep them aloft are highly combustible, exposure to open flames or energy weapon attacks can cause an airborne floater to explode violently. The chance that a floater detonates is based on the number of points of damage it sustains from the possible ignition source. Each point of damage indicates a cumulative 1 in 12 chance of ignition. Thus, a laser shot that inflicts 4 points of damage causes the floater to explode on a d12 roll of 1-4. It is possible for the explosion of one floater to set off others near it, creating a deadly chain reaction. There is a chance 1 in 12 chance that an exploding floater sets off any other floaters from 4 meters to 2 meters distant, and a 2 in 12

chance for any floaters within 2 meters. Exploding floaters in contact with other floaters (a very rare occurrence decided on the by Gamemaster) automatically ignite.

Habitat Society: Floaters depend on their ability to pop into the air to flee attackers. They also seek safety in numbers and are commonly encountered in schools of as many as 120 fish. As one might imagine, seeing a school of a hundred floaters pop into the air simultaneously is an impressive sight.

Floaters bear their young alive, an unusual characteristic common to most of Bluefall's fish. Twice a year, female floaters give birth to between six and eight offspring who are promptly forgotten by their parents. It takes about 8 months for the 30-centimeter-long spawn to grow to adulthood.

Lightning Anemone

It pays to take nothing for granted when diving beneath the seas of Bluefall. Often, the most innocent looking thing is the most deadly.
—AV, CSS

Although the lightning anemone looks rather like the sea anemone common to the oceans of Earth, this creature is actually a type of plant. It has evolved the ability to release a powerful electrical charge to ward off potential predators. Meanwhile, a small, deadly fish known as the razorjaw has evolved in symbiosis with the lightning anemone. This fish opportunistically attacks any victims of the plant's powerful discharge while they are still stunned and helpless.

Description: The lightning anemone is made up of three major parts, each performing a different function. At the base of the plant are a number of irregular roots. These do not provide the plant with nourishment, but they do serve to anchor it in place. The roots merge with a stout, bulbous body roughly a half-meter in diameter. Polyps and other creatures often anchor themselves to its body, making the anemone appear to be an outgrowth of the coral shelf on which it stands. Finally, the fronds of the anemone stretch upward some 3 meters and sway gently in the ocean currents. These have a spongy texture but look very much like any other outcropping of seaweed.

Encounter: Most encounters with a lightning anemone occur when a diver accidentally brushes against one of the swaying fronds. This

contact triggers the primary natural defense mechanism of the plant. Electrical energy generated in the body of the anemone travels through special conductive fibers through the fronds and into the body of the potential enemy.

The shock delivered by the lightning anemone is powerful and dangerous. In addition to causing immediate harm to those who are not sufficiently insulated, this shock can leave a diver dazed and helpless for several minutes.

Lightning Anemone Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Habits: Temperate and tropical coral shelf sea bottom

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 1

Organization: Solitary

Niche: Symbiotic plant (harboring)

Intelligence: None



Lightning Anemone Game Data

STR 0 INT 0
DEX 0 WIL 0
CON 12 (d6+8) PER 0
Durability: 12/12/6/6
Move: none
Reaction score: n/a
Action check: n/a
#Actions: n/a

Attacks

Shock CON feat¹ See text En/0
¹ Victims must make a Constitution feat check to resist effects. Avoiding attacks, no damage: Good, d4e, Ordinary, d8e, Failure d6w, Critical Failure, d12w

Defenses

Armor: d4 (L), d4-2 (H), d6 (En)

Skills

none

The shock of a lightning anemone is considered an Ordinary energy attack that inflicts damage similar to an electrical shock hazard. Victims must make a Constitution feat check. A Critical Failure inflicts d12w; a Failure, d6w, an Ordinary success, d8e, a Good success, d4e, and an Amazing, no damage. In addition, characters who fail this Constitution feat check are stunned for d4 minutes. This stun duration doubles for victims who roll Critical Failures.

After a lightning anemone has discharged its electrical attack, it requires d4+2 minutes to recharge. During that period of time, the plant cannot shock anything.

Habitat Society: The most dangerous aspect of the lightning anemone's attack is not the shock itself. The razorjaw, a deadly predator has evolved a natural resistance to electrical shocks and usually lives in the company of the lightning anemone. When razorjaws sense the plant discharging a shock, they swarm in to attack (see the Razorjaw entry below).

The lightning anemone depends on razorjaws to survive. As they rip apart stunned prey, the water runs thick with blood. The fronds of the plant have adapted to rapidly filter the nutrients in that blood to feed the anemone.

Man o' War

We were diving several kilometers out from Hughes Island to explore the magnificent realm of the coral shelf when my guide motioned for me to halt.

"There's something you don't see every day, Dr. Veras," he said softly. I followed his outstretched finger until I saw a faint shape floating ahead of us. As we watched, it attacked and quickly killed a large gopher fish.

My guide was right. I have never seen another creature like the man o' war by the light of day. Since that day, however, I've seen the man o' war in my nightmares more than once.—**AV, CSS**

The Bluefall man o' war is a deadly predator named for its resemblance to a Terran jellyfish. While its namesake is a large colony of smaller polyps, this aquatic horror is a single massive creature.

Description: Structurally, the man o' war is a simple creature. Its body has only two layers: an endoderm and an ectoderm. It lacks any form of head or brain, although a rudimentary nervous system runs throughout the creature. The body of a man o' war is spherical, and transparent except for a very faint blue tint. It weighs an average of 100 kilograms.

Man o' War Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 1
GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2
Biome: Temperate and tropical open saltwater seas
Encounter Chance: Unlikely
Group Size: 1
Organization: Solitary
Niche: Carnivore
Intelligence: Low-order animal

Man o' War Game Data

STR 8 (d4+6) INT 1 (Animal 1)
DEX 8 (d4+6) WIL 6 (d4+4)
CON 8 (d4+6) PER 1 (Animal 1)
Durability: 8/8/4/4 Action check: 3+/1/4/2
Move: swim 12 #Actions: 1
Reaction score: Ordinary/1

Attacks

Tentacles (x2) 12/6/3 d4e/d4+1e/d4+2e¹ 11/0
¹ Plus poison, see text.

Defenses

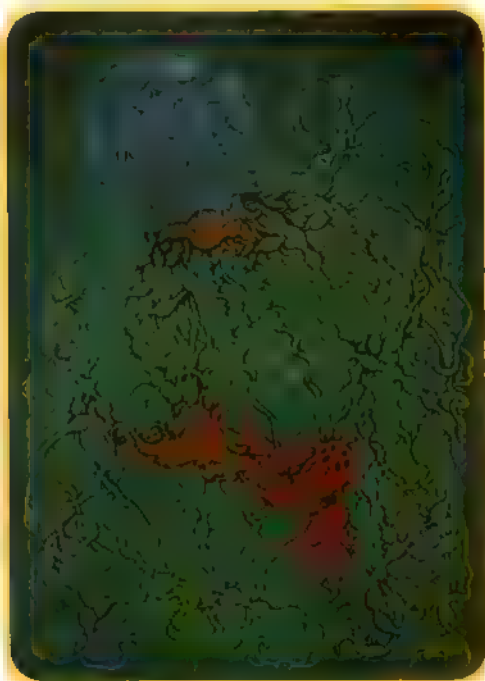
no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d4 (L), d4-2 (H), special—see text (En)

Skills

Unarmed [8]—brawl [12]; Stealth [8]—sneak [12]; Stamina [0]—endurance [12]; Awareness [6]—intuition [0]

Two clusters of ten sensory tentacles drift outward from the spherical body. These trail away in the water, often reaching lengths of up to 15 meters. Whenever a creature brushes against one of these, the man o' war is instantly alerted to its presence. A pair of coiled, stinger tentacles immediately shoots forward from the body to attack, paralyze, and destroy its prey.

Encounter: The Bluefall man o' war is almost invisible while drifting through the seas. This natural transparency allows the creature to strike with surprise, making frequent sneak attack in its endless quest for food.



When the man o' war brings its stinging tentacles into play, it can inflict a painful wound. Anyone stung by the man o' war who suffers at least 1 point of primary damage must resist its poison.

Man o' war toxin is an insulative neurotoxin with an onset time of 1 minute. The duration of the poison attack is 10 minutes. During

the onset time, victims of this toxin feel increasingly dizzy, numb, and disoriented as their respiration and heart rate slow alarmingly. At the end of the onset time, the poison runs its course over the duration of attack. Roll a Constitution feat check to determine damage. A Critical Failure inflicts $d6+1m$, a Failure, $d4+1m$; an Ordinary success, $d8+1w$; a Good success, $d6+1w$; and an Amazing, $d6+1s$. Divide the damage over the duration (10 minutes). When the attack ends, the victim suffers no more damage. The poison can be treated with Medical Science—*treatment* as described in the Hazards section of Chapter 3 Gamemasters in Action in the *Gamemaster Guide*.

The soft body of the creature allows it to absorb many blows, providing it with some protection against low impact (LI) or high impact (HI) attacks. Because of the high fluid content of its body's composition, however, energy weapons (En) are especially effective against the man o' war. Any primary damage inflicted by an energy weapon is increased in severity by one grade. Thus, stun injuries become wounds, wounds become mortal injuries, and any mortal injuries automatically kill the creature.

Habitat/Society: These hermaphroditic aquatic creatures drift through the seas. They normally ride the currents or spin slowly and use their tentacles to push them through the water. Sometimes they use the flexible edges of their bodies in a rippling and contracting action to pulse through the water more quickly. They attack primarily by instinct.

When one man o' war encounters another, the two sometimes exchange sperm packets through intertwining their tentacles. They store these beneath their skin until the eggs are ready, whereupon they use them in some undetermined manner to fertilize their own eggs. Though unused packets have been discovered in dissected specimens, it is unknown whether the packets migrate internally to the eggs or they are torn loose and placed internally near the eggs to later burst at the proper time.

Twice a year, a man o' war sprays out a cloud of fertile eggs. These sink to the coral shelf and hatch some two weeks later. It takes the new hatchlings about a year to grow to full size.



More than one explorer has vanished without a trace while visiting the hidden world beneath Bluefall's waves. In recent months, I have begun to suspect that the force behind many of these losses are the deadly, swarming fish known as razorjaws. —AV, CSS

Razorjaws are small predators, not more than a third of a meter long, that lurk in the crannies of Bluefall's coral shelves. They have developed a symbiotic relationship with the lightning anemone and usually live in and around those dangerous electrified plants.

Description: Razorjaws are between 25 to 35 centimeters long. They have narrow, strong bodies designed for speed and agility in the water. Their narrow eyes lend them a menacing countenance. Their wide mouths are lined with rows of needlelike teeth more than capable of stripping flesh from bone at an incredible rate of speed. They weigh an average of 11 kilograms at adulthood.

In addition to possessing the normal senses of other fish, razorjaws have evolved an unusual sensory organ at the base of their ra-

zorjaw skulls. This organ enables the creatures to detect even faint electrical discharges over great distances.

In addition to this unusual adaptation, a razorjaw's skin also plays a role in enabling them to survive near the swaying death of lightning anemones. The outer layers of a razorjaw's skin are ex-

Razorjaw Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Biome: Temperate and tropical coral shelf sea bottom

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Growth Size: 3–18 (3d6)

Organization: School

Niche: Symbiotic opportunistic carnivore

Intelligence: High-order animal



Razorjaw Game Data

STR 6 (2d4+1) INT 3 (Animal 6 or d4+3)
DEX 14 (2d4+9) WIL 9 (d8+4)
CON 5 (d4+2) PER 2 (Animal 7 or d4+2)
Durability: 5/5/3/3 Action check: 14+/13/6/3
Move: swim 60 #Actions: 2
Reaction score: Good/2

Attacks

Bite 12/E/3 d8+1w/d4w/d4+1w E/U

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: none (L), none (U), d8+3 (En)

Skills

Unarmed (5)-brawl (13), Stealth (14)-sneak (15), hide (15),
Movement (14)-swim (15), Stamina (5)-endurance (6),
Awareness (5)-perception (10), Resolve (5).

ceptional insulators, protecting the creature from electrical attacks and, by extension, energy weapons of all types.

Encounter: The wonders of evolution have taught the razorjaw that food is often found in the presence of the lightning anemone, and it is near those plants that an explorer is likely to encounter them. The lightning anemone has evolved an efficient means of feeding in the wake of the razorjaw attack. The two species coexist in a splendid, if dangerous, display of symbiosis. From time to time, they are found in other regions, but such encounters are very rare.

The shock delivered by a lightning anemone acts like a dinner bell for ravenous razorjaws. As soon as their electrical sensors register such a discharge, these fish race to the attack at full speed. Ripping at any stunned prey they find near the anemone with deadly, powerful jaws, they make short work of almost any animal—including human divers.

Habitat/Society: Razorjaws live in schools of three to eighteen fish, with each such group staking out a claim to a single lightning anemone. Schools can distinguish the shock of their plant from that of those nearby. Three or four lightning anemones in a given area, may each be attended to and defended by its own school of fish. Explorers who destroy one school of razorjaws find a fresh armada of

predators ready to strike if they set off the electrical shock of one of the nearby plants.

Although razorjaws dwell amid the coral shelves that surround Bluefall's islands, they give birth only in the remote waters of the ocean depths. Once a year, the females of the school leave for a period of about 10 days. During this time, they travel to the deep waters beyond the coral shelves to become mothers. It is worth noting that razorjaws are among the minority of Bluefall's egg-laying fish. After the already-fertilized eggs are deposited, the fish return to their schools.

The eggs hatch about a week after they are laid, and the newly spawned fish swim thereafter to shallow waters and locate their own lightning anemone plant to defend. Only about 10% of a razorjaw's young survive to reach the coral shelves and only about 50% of the spawning mothers survive to rejoin their schools.



Sky Fisher

The sky fisher is one of the more unusual predators found on Bluefall. Who would have imagined that an animal would evolve to feed on Bluefall's scarce flying creatures? I suppose the great xenobiologist Aiji mu Kurn said it best when he spoke before the Verge Xenological Institute's yearly consortium.

"Wherever you find life, you are likely to find something that has evolved an interesting and ingenious means of surviving in this often hostile universe. You also find something else just as superbly evolved to prey on it"—**AV, CSS**

The sky fisher is an unusual fish found on or just beneath the surface of Bluefall's seemingly boundless seas. Although not dangerous to other fish or swimming creatures, this predator is deadly to creatures flying over it. More than one hapless explorer using a grav belt can attest to its bite.

Description: Individually, the sky fisher looks like a Terran puffer fish that is roughly thrice the size of an adult human. It weighs approximately 250 kilograms and measures from 3 to 6 meters in



Sky Fisher Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

BRAPH: G2/R1/A2/T3/H2

Habits: Open temperate or tropical saltwater seas

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 3-6 (d4+2)

Organization: Solitary

Niche: Carnivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

Sky Fisher Game Data

STR 15	(d4+12)	INT 3	(Animal 6 or d4+4)
DEX 8	(d4+6)	WIL 7	(d4+5)
CON 14	(d12+4)	PER 2	(Animal 6 or d4+4)

Durability: 14/14/7/7 Action check: 5+/4/4/2
 Move: swim 12 #Actions: 2
 Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Attacks			
Tongue ¹	16/8/4	Initiative	L/W
Bite	16/8/4	d4w/d4+2w/d4m	L/W

¹ Tongue can only attack flying creatures.

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor: d4+1 (L), d4-1 (H), none (Ex)

Skills

Unarmed (15)—brawl (16), Stealth (8)—sneak (10), Movement (14), Stun (14)—endurance (15), Awareness (7)—perception (9), Resilience (7).

length. Although it has pale, mottled flesh, the creature appears to be a mass of green and brown seaweed because of a growth of spongelike fronds that typically attach themselves to its skin. As the fisher swims about, the fronds feed by straining plankton from the water.

Encounter: The sky fisher is often encountered in the company of Bluefall's large aquatic predators. As those deadly hunters move through the water, they often frighten schools of floaters (see the Gilded Floater entry above). When these unusual fish inflate their float bladders and pop into the air, the sky fisher goes to work.

When a flying creature passes over the sky fisher, the creature fires out its 5-meter-long, chameleonlike tongue. Any creature successfully hit by the tongue must make a Strength feat check with a +1 step penalty to avoid being yanked into the creature's toothy maw. If the attack was a Good success, this penalty is increased to +2 steps. An Amazing success results in a +3 step penalty.

A creature drawn into the fisher's mouth suffers damage automatically each round until it succeeds at a Strength feat check with a +2 step penalty. When a creature succeeds, it escapes and can flee or attack unimpeded. While trapped in its maw, a victim makes all attacks against the sky fisher with a +2 step penalty.

The sky fisher can use this attack mode only on airborne targets. It cannot snare other fish or swimmers.

Habitat/Society: These cunning predators swim slowly about while constantly watching the skies above them for prey. Although they are often encountered in groups of four or five, they do not travel in schools. Encounters with more than one sky fisher normally indicate that some larger predator is in the area.

Sky fishers mate twice a year, in the spring and fall. In each case, the female gives birth to between six and ten live offspring a month later. These grow to adulthood over the course of the next two years.

FATEHPUR

Fatehpur is a large, hot world with abundant bodies of water. Over 80% of the planet consists of water-filled craters, murky swamps, and jungle-choked rivers and lakes. Visitors find that the gravity, the heat, and the ubiquitous undergrowth make for difficult and often harrowing exploration. For some, though, the reward is worth the effort: Fatehpur is an abundant source of wood.

The view of Fatehpur from orbit contradicts the technical data. The world's oceans seem to cover only about 45% of the planet's surface. But once a ship searches for a stable landing site, the vast amount of water becomes obvious.

Dry land is not scarce on Fatehpur; the surface volume of dry land is roughly equivalent that on Earth. Yet Fatehpur has a huge proportion of wetlands in relation to the rest of its surface. Fatehpur's biomes also include grasslands, forests, jungles, and even the occasional (if short-lived) equatorial desert. The arctic regions are the only places where life does not flourish. Flora and animal life is otherwise quite plentiful, from the depths of the oceans to the tallest mountains. In fact, soil samples from Fatehpur indicate that the planet's surface is especially receptive to new species of plant life—perhaps due to the machinations of the mysterious nanites that infuse the planet's ecosystem.

Similarly, every animal phylum is represented somewhere on Fatehpur. The largest mammals are sea-dwelling creatures approximately 18 meters long. The next largest sea structures are harmless cephalopods measuring 2 meters in length. The forests represent the most populous biome in that they incorporate woodlands, waterways, and hilly regions, all of which teem with life. However, none of these thousands of animal or plant species represent the planet's dominant species.

Fatehpur

Parent: Chisholm, G4
Orbital Radius: 0.85 AU
Orbital Period: 301.7 days
Rotation Period: 23.8 hours
Axial Tilt: Moderate (18.5°)
Diameter: 18,356 km
Density (Earth=1): 0.74

Atmosphere: N₂, O₂
Surface Gravity: 1.06 g
Pressure: 1.05 atm
Median Temperature: 372° C
Satellites: One
SRAPs: G2/G2/G2/G3/H2

The Nanites

The dominant species on Fatehpur are molecule-sized machines of indeterminate origin. These nanites are certainly far too advanced for any of the known species to have created them. They might be all that remains of a Precursor experiment conceived, begun, and forgotten millennia ago. A conservative estimate would place about 550 trillion nanites on Fatehpur.

The nanites have a single purpose: accelerated, artificial evolution in animal life. "Accelerated" may be a misleading term, however. The process of evolving a *Homo erectus* to a *Homo sapiens* would still require a few thousand years with their meddling. Of course, that's still impressive when compared to the hundreds of thousands of years the process took on Earth.

The key to the accelerated evolution involved manipulation of genetic coding. When first introduced into an organism, the nanites make a few experimental alterations to the offspring, testing its viability as a candidate for further experimentation. When the offspring eventually reproduces, the nanites make more alterations to the next generation, and the process continues.

If progress on Fatehpur is any indication, the goal of all this genetic engineering seems to be to produce sentient species. However, until modern science learns who created the nanites, their plans for the newly advanced nanimals may never be known.

The existence of the nanites was discovered after a routine medical examination turned up anomalies in a survey team member who had been attacked by a nanofury. The nanites were found in the area of the wound and were slowly expanding outward, though not at any particular cost to the team member's health. The scientific staff quarantined the explorer until they determined the nature and general purpose of the nanites.

Nanate

One can see a sadness in the eyes of the nanates, an awareness that the future of their species is in the hands of otherworldly beings they can never see, never contact, and never comprehend. We can only hope that the purpose for which they are being engineered is not a sinister one, for that would be the ultimate tragedy: raising them to an intellectual level where they could fully appreciate the injustice they might suffer.—**AV, CSS**

An interesting implication presented by the nanites of Fatehpur is that this is not the only world where they exist or have existed. This draws the further implication that many of the sentient species encountered in the Verge, and elsewhere, might have been artificially raised by these nanites. Who knows? Perhaps that includes the weren, the t'sa, the sesheyans, and the humans. Perhaps even the protofrel were one day, millennia ago, uplifted by the nanites. The mechalus seem a particularly likely species to have benefited from nanite intercession.—**Rudon Grant, Concord Administrator**

The species dubbed "nanates" by the survey team are the nanites prize pupils on Fatehpur. Chosen either because of their existing progression up the evolutionary scale or for their genetic malleability, they have been elevated to a level approaching that of prehistoric humans.

Regardless of the whim of the nanites, the continued existence of the nanates is in question. As they evolve beyond the savagery of

Nanate Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R2/A2/P3/H2

Habits: Temperate and tropical forests, plains, and riverbanks

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 3–12 (3d4)

Organization: Extended families (troops)

Niche: Omnivore

Intelligence: Subsentient

the other denizens of their world, they may evolve beyond the capacity for the kind of brutality needed to survive in a violent environment.

Description Adult nanates stand just over 1 meter tall. They have long forearms, slightly shorter legs, a nearly vestigial tail, and a forward-leaning posture. They weigh an average of 50 kilograms. They are covered almost entirely with short, wiry hair 2 to 3 centimeters in length that is nearly always black, gray, or striped in an alternating pattern of the two.



Nanate Game Data

STR 12 (d5+8) INT 6 (d4+3)
DEX 9 (d5+2) WIL 12 (d5+8)
CON 10 (d4+8) PER 8 (2d4+3)
Durability: 10/10/5/5 Action check: 12+/11/5/2
Move: sprint 20, run 16, walk 6 #Actions: 2
Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last resorts: 1

Attacks

Bite 13/6/3 d6s/d4+1w/d6w L10
Claw (2) 13/6/3 d4+1s/d4w/d4+1w L10

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
no INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
+1 WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
+1 resistance modifier vs. poisons
Armor: d4 (L), d4-2 (H), d4-2 (Ea)

Skills

Unarmed [12]-brawl [13], Stealth [8]-shadow [10], Stamina [10]-endurance [12], Knowledge [6], Tactics [6], Awareness [12]-intuition [16], Investigate [12]-track [14], Resolve [12]-mental [14], physical [13], Interaction [8].

Nanate faces are best described as puglike. Their noses are extremely short (almost nonexistent), and their broad lower jaws do not extend far past their noses. Their lower teeth tend to poke up a few millimeters above their lips, especially in older nanates. Their ears are located near the back of their skulls and are covered by flaps of soft, furry skin. Nanates' eyes are their most expressive features. They seem almost human in the depth of emotion they convey.

A nanate's three-toed forepaws are on the verge of being hands. The claws on the forepaws are much less pronounced than those on the two-toed rear paws, though they are no less dangerous. Nanates often curl their forepaws under to walk on their knuckles and rear paws, and they can achieve astounding bursts of speed in this fashion.

Encounter: Nanates live in communal extended families of up to twelve individuals. Characters are most likely to encounter hunting or foraging nanate families. Most of their daily functions are performed on the move or during the period immediately after feeding. At night, they employ a primitive camouflage system to hide in foliage or in the low, broad dagaba trees common to Fateshup's jungles.

When nanates encounter nanomutants or nanofurries, their behavior alters drastically. They become cautious to an extreme, making as little noise as possible and actively avoiding their potential foes with slow, careful movements.

This behavior is deceptive. While it might appear submissive, the nanates are preparing a counterattack in the event one of the family is threatened. At the first sign of an aggressive move, the would-be victim runs in a predetermined direction. When the predator inevitably pursues, the rest of the family pursues the predator. And if the predator switches targets, the process begins again, with the entire family switching direction. This goes on until the predator is brought down by the harrying nanates or until it grows too tired to go on.

Curiously, nanates leave alone any predator that breaks off the pursuit through exhaustion. They happily devour one that they subdue through attacks. It is as though they are consciously attempting

to breed the faster predators out of the gene pool, by letting the slow ones live to procreate. Whether this behavior is inspired by the nanates in their bodies is unknown.

When nanates encounter aliens, their response is much the same as when they encounter nanomutants or nanofurries, though they exhibit extreme confusion when aliens do not pursue them, regardless of provocation. Eventually, the nanates drift quietly into the surrounding forest and move away from the strange intruder. A second nonhostile encounter with the same type of alien causes the nanates to subsequently simply forego all attempts at luring them into a chase. They learn very quickly which creatures are threats and which are not, and they convey this information to others of their kind. (The survey team found that within a few days of their second contact, family groups within 200 kilometers immediately moved away from them rather than attempting the bait and harry tactic.)

Habitat/Society: Each nanate family ranges over an area of roughly 20 square kilometers. When a family encounters other nanates, its members are quite social, rather than territorial. The two families share information, perhaps about food and water sources and the presence of predators. The different families tend not to stay together, since food is still not plentiful enough to support large groups. Still, it is usually through these meetings that the nanates acquire mates. The male invariably joins the female's family after some rather poignant parting rituals with his previous family.

Each nanate pairings normally produce only one child, and the relationship between mates lasts only a few years. A second child only occasionally occurs after the first child has grown to adulthood. Usually these second children occur in a family line that has already produced more than one offspring per mated couple. The dominant theory is that this is an artificial control imposed by the nanates to ensure that the latest nanate version is fully tested before the strain is allowed to continue. That a second child occurs in the same immediate family is a sign that the nanates are pleased with the characteristics of the child produced by those parents and wish to double their chances of repeating the desired results.

Nanates are extremely willing to share food with other nanates, a practice that suggests nanite influence. Presumably the tiny robots use this behavior as a way to transfer themselves from one creature to another. (Another method designed to transport nanites into creatures other than more nanates is to make use of flying coprophagous insects as troop carriers to deliver small groups of nanites into areas of the planet that the nanates cannot reach.)

The life of a nanate is punctuated by a variety of behavioral rituals. Some seem to be imposed by the nanites, and some do not. The complexity of these rituals is an indicator of the intelligence of the nanates. They have rituals for parting, meeting new nanates, adopting new members into their families, celebrating births, and venerating the dead. Though they leave the remains of their dead to scavengers (yet another means of transferring nanites to fresh territory), they meticulously reclaim the skeletal remains and hide them away somewhere. No offworlder has presumably ever seen one of these crypts, since the nanates take extreme care in hiding them—and extreme zeal in guarding them, when it comes to that.

Nanates also display a certain kind of hierarchy within and among families. The eldest are revered first, followed by the very youngest, mated pairs who have produced more than one child, mated pairs who have just produced a child, and nanates who provide the greatest amount of food for the rest of the family. Nanates do not reward combat prowess despite its place in their hunting rituals. Instead, the most aggressive nanates are given the task of playing bait for predators. Presumably, the nanates use this as a nonconfrontational way of pushing them out of the social group

Nanofury

The machinations of the nanites occasionally produce a species with no future. Most such species fail to survive because they are too weak. But a few are too strong, and they prove a threat to the other species on Patebaur, some of which might one day achieve whatever pinnacle toward which the nanites are working. These cannot be allowed to continue to breed.

One example is the nanofuries. These creatures may be distant cousins to the nanites since they do not suffer from extreme mutations as the nanomutants do. But they have been programmed with behavioral patterns that render them blindly aggressive under certain circumstances. Unfortunately, these circumstances are not always clear to those who stray across their paths. Any given nanofury might one day placidly ignore interlopers and the next day attack the same interlopers like mortal enemies.

Description: The nanofury stands nearly 3 meters tall and weighs approximately 250 kilograms. It superficially resembles a wren in size and general shape. It lacks tusks and natural camouflage, but it otherwise possesses the same sloping forehead and muscle structure. Still, a nanofury could never be mistaken for anything but a shaved wren. Its hair is far too short, and its claws are hooked. Further, the nanofury's brow is graced with a pair of short, heavy horns. If that's not enough of a hint, the presence of the long tail should distinguish the two.

Encounter: Its very nature makes a nanofury a solitary creature. The nanofury is ostensibly an herbivore and occasionally a scavenger, but when one nanofury encounters another it tends to result in a violent attack—one that almost always ends in the victorious nanofury devouring its competitor.

The nanofury begins its assault with a hellow and a charge. Once it makes contact with a target, the target is allowed a Strength feat check to remain standing. If the check succeeds, the nanofury rams again, repeating the process until the victim finally falls.

The nanofury attacks until the last moving target that was present when its assault began is dead. This behavior can lead to it assaulting other creatures that happened to be present when it began its assault on an interloper nanofury. When the interloper nanofury is on the ground, the nanofury's true brutality becomes clear. It bites and tears at its downed foe.

Nanofury Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R2/A2/P3/H2

Biome: All land

Encounter Chance: Slim

Group Size: Varies (roll d20: 1-18, 1; 20, d6+1)

Organization: Solitary

Niche: Herbivore (occasional carnivore)

Intelligence: High-order animal



Nanofury Game Data

STR 14 (d12+5) INT 3 (Animal 4 or d6)
 DEX 6 (d12) WIL 18 (d6+6)
 CON 16 (d12+10) PER 18 (Animal 4 or d4)
 Durability: 16/16/6/6 Action check: 15+/14/7/3
 Moves: run 28, walk 8 #Actions: 3
 Reaction score: Good/3

Attacks

Bite	18/5/4	d4w/d4+2w/d4+4w	L1/0
Claw (x2)	15/7/3	d6s/d4+1w/d4+2w	L1/0
Tail lash	10/5/2	d4s/d4+2s/d4w	L1/0
Rare	15/7/3	2d4s/d4+4s/2d4w	L1/6

Defenses

+4 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor: d6 (L1), d6-1 (H1), d6-1 (Ea)

Skills

Unarmed (14)-brawl (15); Stamina (16)-endurance (20);
 Awareness (10)-perception (12); Resolve (10)-physical (14).

ignoring anything that does not physically prevent it from savaging its prey. It will not flee, and it will not give ground. It does not seem to want to eat downed foes other than other nanofuries, however and ignores them once they cease moving.

Habitat Society The nanofury generally makes its home in the forested hills of Fatehpur's river region and rarely ventures forth. It lives alone, reacting violently to the presence of other nanofuries, and it often dies without ever mating. Nanofuries that do give birth abandon their offspring within the first few months, instinctively aware of what will happen should the child ever reach adulthood.

A nanofury's life span is generally less than ten years. Presumably, if one could be removed from its environment and purged of the nanites somehow, it might live somewhat longer. But it is unlikely to ever mate, since the secret of its murderous rages is that they are triggered by the presence of females of its own species.

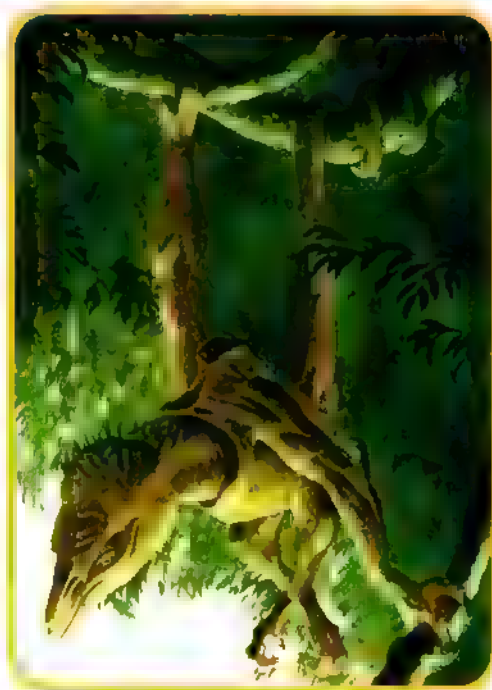
The nanofury is an excellent illustration of my point regarding the danger of using the nanites to short-circuit evolution. These basically gentle creatures are cursed by nanite interference to a doomed future as a species and violent end as individuals. One wonders if the nanite and the nanofury were once much more closely related—and how long ago. —AV, CSS

Nanomutant, Type A

The nanites have heavily modified other denizens of Fatehpur. In doing so they have produced a few evolutionary leaps and not a few dead-ends. Currently, the nanites are rapidly evolving one species in two distinct directions. The first, or Type A nanomutant, is an arboreal hunter of animal cunning.

Description. The Type A nanomutant measures 4 meters from tip to tail, weighs about 80 kilograms, and is commonly covered in yellow and gray scales. Long, spidery limbs carry it through the branches, and its prehensile tail allows it secure purchase even when all its other limbs are in use. It possesses short, sharp claws and two rows of broad, sharp teeth.

Individual Type A nanomutants vary in size and color, along with a variety of less obvious characteristics. The following table provides examples of how the Gamemaster can modify the statistics of any given specimen. The Gamemaster should roll d4+2 times on this table, choose d4 mutations, or design one unique mutation for the nanomutant to display (Chapter 13. Mutants in the



Nanomutant A Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series 1
 Environment: Class 1
 GRAPH: G2/R2/A2/P3/H2
 Biome: Temperate and tropical forests
 Encounter Chance: Unlikely
 Group Size: 1 or 10-200 (10d20)
 Organization: Solitary (except during mating season)
 Niche: Carnivore
 Intelligence: High-order animal

Player's Handbook is a good source of inspiration for additional mutations.)

d20 roll	Mutation
1-2	+1 STR, 1 step bonus on attacks (-3 max)
3-5	+1 DEX, -1 step bonus on action checks (-3 max)
6-8	+1 CON, run +2d4, walk +d4
9	+1 INT, add Tactics broad skill
10-11	+1 WIL, 1 step bonus to Awareness checks
12	+1 PER, add Interaction broad skill
13	-1 STR
14	-1 DEX
15	-1 CON
16	-1 INT
17	-1 WIL
18	-1 PER
19-20	Paralytic poison bite, 1 minute onset time

Encounter: A solitary hunter, the Type A nanomutant attacks by waiting patiently in the cover of tree branches for a prospective victim to approach. Absolutely fearless, it eagerly leaps down onto much larger creatures. It will even leap on single creatures in a pack to try to startle the others away long enough to subdue or kill its chosen prey. The Type A nanomutant never attacks unless its victim seems completely unaware.

Though its fangs and claws are its best weapons, the Type A nanomutant relies primarily on its prehensile tail to provide a distraction. It wraps its tail around the victim's throat and then starts in with its claws and teeth when the victim begins struggling against strangulation.

If the victim wishes to focus on disentangling itself from the nanomutant's tail, the nanomutant receives a -1 step bonus on bite and claw attacks for that round. (See the rules for strangulation in the Hazards section of Chapter 3: Gamemasters in Action in the *Gamemaster Guide*.)

Habitat/Society: Type A and Type B nanomutants practice an unusual mating system that may be motivated and orchestrated entirely by nanites. In the spring and autumn seasons on Fatehpur, the normally solitary nanomutants gather in huge enclaves at the edge of their forest homes. Here they engage in typical pack dominance

Nanomutant A Game Data

STR 12 (d12+5) INT 3 (Animal 7 or d4+4)
DEX 12 (d12+5) WIL 0 (d8+3)
CON 12 (d12+5) PER 2 (Animal 7 or d4+4)
Durability: 12/12/6/6 Action check: 12+/11/5/2
Move: run 24, walk 6 (brachiate 18) #Actions: 2
Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Bite¹ 16/8/4 d6+1s/d5w/d5+1w LI/O
Claw (x2)¹ 12/6/3 d6+1s/d4w/d4+1w LI/O
Strangle 14/7/3 special special

¹If a victim concentrates on disentangling itself from a successful strangle attack, bite and claw attacks are at a -1 step bonus.

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. males attacks
+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d4+1 (LI), d4 (HI), d4+1 (En)

Skills

Athletics [12]-climb [15], Unarmed [12]-brawl [13], Acrobatics [12], Stealth [12]-hide [14], sneak [14], Awareness [8]-Intuition [10], perception [10].

behavior, and the males fight for the attentions of the females. This mating period lasts for several days, during which time the males mate with as many females as possible.

During the mating season, the weaker members of the species inevitably die at the hands of the stronger, apparently as a breeding mechanism enforced by the nanites. Other species of Fatehpur have learned to give a wide berth to the traditional mating grounds even when nanomutants are not present.

A few weeks after mating, a female nanomutant lays a clutch of 6d4 eggs that hatch in 1 to 2 months. The hatching nanomutants grow to maturity within 4 months if other predators or other nanomutants do not devour them first. While not terribly territorial, Type A nanomutants have no qualms about attacking and devouring their own kind.

Nanomutant Type B

The Type B nanomutant is a more intelligent version of the Type A variety. It dwells in forested areas but prefers to hunt on the ground.

Description: The average Type B nanomutant looks like a smaller, sleeker version of the Type A variety. It measures only about 3 meters and weighs between 55-60 kilograms. Its tail comprises only about a quarter of its body length. Its scales are darker than a Type A's and tend toward a sort of muddy brown with spots of bright green ringed with dark red.

The leath of the Type B nanomutant turn backward to facilitate tearing meat off its victims. Its claws are its most deadly weapon, though. They are up to 10 centimeters long and equipped with sharp barbs meant to catch and hold prey.

Nanomutant B Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 1
GRAPE: G2/R2/A2/P3/H2
Biome: Temperate and tropical plains
Encounter Chance: Unlikely
Group Size: 1 or 10-200 (1042H)
Organization: Solitary (except during mating season)
Niche: Carnivore
Intelligence: High-order animal

The mutations of a Type B nanomutant are more extreme than that of its tree-dwelling brother though it has fewer of them. The Gamemaster should roll d4 times, choose two mutations from the following table, or design one unique mutation for the nanomutant to display (Chapter 13 Mutants in the *Player's Handbook* is a good source of inspiration for additional mutations.)

d20 roll Mutation

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 1-5 | Adrenal surge, 1 step bonus to attacks and action checks |
| 6-9 | Night vision, as per the Player's Handbook mutation |
| 10-12 | Toxin tolerance, as per the Player's Handbook mutation |
| 13-15 | Illusion, Telepathy— <i>Illusion</i> at rank 3 |
| 16 | Slow, +2 step penalty to attacks and action checks |
| 17 | Pungent, +2 step penalty to Stealth attempts |
| 18 | Weak mind, -2 step resistance modifier vs. mental attacks |
| 19 | Poor vision, +2 step penalty to Awareness checks |
| 20 | Polarized, can never mate |

Encounter: A Type B nanomutant is almost always alone. It locates prey either by sight or by scent and then creeping close enough to pounce. Individuals sometimes make use of particularly useful mutations (the illusion ability, for instance) to either mask their presence or to charge into a pack of creatures from a distance, for example.

The Type B nanomutant is an aggressive hunter. It only passes up opportunities to take prey when it has recently fed (on a roll of 1-2 on d6). Otherwise, it attacks even large groups of large creatures, and as long as it has received less or equal mortal damage than it has inflicted, it continues to attack. It switches targets if the first victim falls but others are still attacking.

Habitat Society: The behavioral patterns of the Type B nanomutant are almost identical those of the Type A variety. The Type B is far more territorial, but it does not prey on its own kind—or even the Type A—except during mating season.

The prospect of artificially stimulated evolution is stunning, especially when engineered entirely by alien nanomachines. This is a



discovery I feel can and should be investigated with as much attention as the Galactic Concord can muster. Not only could it enable us to weed out undesirable characteristics—if properly channeled—it could provide significant clues about the pasts of a great many species. —**RG, CLA**

Occasionally I am dumbfounded at the shortsightedness of other species. In his rush to explore and exploit the nanites of Fatehpur, Administrator Grant has chosen to overlook or ignore the ramifications of this course of action. One need only look at the data on the nanomutants to realize that these creatures are but the current favorites of the nanites—the experiments that show the most promise. Like so many other experiments that must have gone before, should these not prove viable a hundred generations from now—or fifty, or ten, or even one—the nanites will render them extinct with as much sympathy as they have artificially evolved them.

Administrator Grant is making multiple mistakes. First, he assumes that the nanites will somehow know to stop when the subjects feel the experiment is a success. Second, he assumes that the resulting mutations will not simply kill the subjects or that the subjects will not kill the scientists. This evolutionary plague must never be allowed to leave Fatehpur. —**AV, CSS**

Nanomutant B Game Data

STR 10	(d6+8)	INT 4	(Animal 9 or d6+5)
DEX 12	(d12+6)	WIL 10	(d8+6)
CON 10	(d6+8)	PER 3	(Animal 8 or d6+5)

Durability: 10/10/5/5 Action check: 12+/11/5/2
 Move: sprint 40, run 20, walk 5 #Actions: 2
 Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Bite	16/6/4	d4w/d6w/d6+1w	LL/T
Claw (x2)	13/6/3	d8+1s/d6+1w/d4+1w	LL/Q

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor: d4 (LL), d4-1 (HD), d4 (En)

Skills

Unarmed [10]—brawl [16], Stealth [12]—shadow [14], sneak [14], Stamina [10], Awareness [10]—intuition [14], perception [12], Investigate [10].



SENNACHERIB

Sennacherib, a moon of Sargen in the Sage system, is much as I imagine ancient Earth between the extinction of the dinosaurs and before the first of the primates. Having now experienced this alien world, it defines for me the concept of a cradle of life: brutish beasts lumbering across vast plains of desolate wastes under a ruthless sun, seeking water and scrub grass, and being plagued with periodic natural disasters.

The greatest disaster on Sennacherib is the recurring swarms of kamjir rak flies, though a close second would be the destructive tectonic activity. Sennacherib is wrecked by quakes, and two regions host strings of active and dormant volcanoes, one of which belches vast quantities of smoke and ash on a daily basis. The ground for hundreds of kilometers around is a nearly uniform black carpet of cooled cinders. Walking on it creates odd little puffs of smoke, and leaves eerie footprints. Most animals avoid the area. Those that do not have left behind bizarre mummified corpses cast in ash, frozen in time.

Despite the periodic tremors and the deadly insect swarms, Sennacherib is a pleasant place. The gravity is a bit overwhelming at first, but after a period of adjustment, it becomes bearable. One quickly learns to either avoid strenuous activity or to wear powered armor. Considering the flies and the great tulle, perhaps wearing powered armor is the better option. —*BE, CLA*

Sennacherib's atmospheric and ecological conditions make it a dry, dusty mass without much vegetation. The primary contributor is the lack of adequate rainfall, but the combination of heat, insects, and roving herds of herbivores prevent vegetation from getting an adequate foothold on the ecosystem. The most prolific vegetation growth appears on various island chains where the tudd herds are small, if not nonexistent, and the kamjir rak flies rarely swarm. Sennacherib is not a farmer's moon.

The majority of the surface is best classified as desert or wasteland. In a few regions, a handful of forests can be found, mostly on isolated islands. Grasslands and wetlands line the coasts of the continents. The topography of the deserts changes frequently as the tulle and kamjir rak flies scour first one area of the surface, then another, leaving previously despoiled areas to make a partial recovery before the herds and swarms return again.

The most attractive resource of Sennacherib is its high mineral content. Precious and semiprecious gemstones have been discovered in various locations, though the profit margin of an operation to mine them cannot be determined until the size and quality of the deposits are assessed. Obviously, as corporation wishes to go to the expense of establishing a barrier against the tudd herds and the fly swarms, begin a strip mining operation, and then discover that the deposits will not even produce industrial-grade gemstones. The few small areas where useful ore deposits have been discovered are also not likely to receive attention until metals become scarce elsewhere.

One obvious natural resource that has gone so far untouched by the Galactic Concord is the tulle themselves. The vast herds could provide a great deal of meat to populated worlds should the Concord choose to make the commitment of establishing tulle ranches. One species has already done so, though without the Concord's knowledge. The madurr (see Appendix One: The Madurr) have constructed a small facility near a series of deep gorges just below the moon's equator in an area currently inundated with tulle. Each day, the madurr slaughter the dozens of tulle that wander into the gorges and become lost. When madurr cargo ships come to Sennacherib, they exchange supplies for preserved tulle carcasses.

This facility goes unnoticed by Concord scans because of the infrequent visits of the supply ships and the madurr adherence to using nonpowered weapons in their tulle-harvesting activities. The madurr on Sennacherib seem to find the use of melee and projectile weapons a refreshing challenge, and the stratosphere in the facility is more like that of a safari clubhouse than a ranch. However, if the Galactic Concord ever locates the madurr on Sargen's moon, the madurr will certainly drop their self-imposed restriction and use their best weapons to mount a defense.

Sennacherib

Parent: Sargen (Sage, G4)

92,226 km

(0.53 from Sage)

Orbital Period: 20 days

(Sage 345.3 days)

Rotation Period: 47.61 hours

Axial Tilt: 8.2

Diameter: 16,244

Density (Earth=1): 1.21

Surface Gravity: 1.34 g

Atmosphere: N₂, O₂

Pressure: 1.04 atm

Median Temperature: 28.1 C

Satellites: None

IRAPM: G3/G2/A2/F3/H2

Great Tudd

Of all the creatures we encountered on Sennacherith, the great tudds are the ones I found most mentioned in casual conversation. "Obstinate as a tudd," and "all the persistence of a tudd" became common expressions aboard the Kepler —RB, CLA

Sennacherith is largely an ecosystem arranged around huge herds of tudds, which are massive beasts that endlessly graze the pastures of the moon. Most of the species encountered by the survey crew were harmless and approachable. The larger species, blessed by nature with a vicious disposition and a massive set of horns, are considerably more aggressive.

Description: The differences between varieties of tudd are obvious to anyone who has seen them side by side. Though the hides of all of the species are uniformly dun-colored, the great tudd possesses heavy, padded feet, whereas the smaller variety has something more equivalent to hooves. The interlocking armor plates of the great tudd are thick and ridged. Solid projections protect the neck, shoulders, and hindquarters. Finally, the plates on the great tudd's head curve downward and forward to form massive horns used for ramming. The average great tudd measures 4 meters from horns to tail and 1.5 meters across. It weighs 900 kilograms.

Encounter: If a hero is anywhere near where a great tudd grazes, it is virtually impossible not to encounter the beast. Territorial to an almost comical degree, the great tudd charges any creature—or object, for that matter it can see. The safe range for approaching a great tudd is about 100 meters. Any closer and the beast charges.

The vicious attack continues until the interloper has fallen or fled,

or until the great tudd has knocked itself unconscious. (The sound of its impact against the side of an STG shuttle is how the beast received its name.) With interlocking armor plates protecting its head and neck, however, self-inflicted unconsciousness can take quite a while. Effectively, the creature must suffer more impact damage than it can withstand (treat the impact as a short fall) over the course of several rounds before it decides that it can suffer the presence of the intruder. Thus, the great tudd almost always wins its battles eventually—even against rocks, trees, and grounded vehicles, including space ships.

Habitat/Society: Ordinary tudds are herd beasts, but the great tudd is as solitary a creature as it can be and still survive as a species. Mating rituals are simple and brutal. The male charges the female repeatedly until she is unconscious or out of his reach. A typical litter includes one to three pups, and when those pups reach an age old enough to survive on their own, the mother chases them away. Until that time, her scent indicates to other male great tudd that she is forbidden, and the only others of her kind that charge her are her own young while they are practicing the skills they will need later.

The aggressiveness of the great tudd is a by-product of the

Great Tudd Ecological Data

Necksmithy: Series 1

Environment: Class 2

GRAPH: G3/R2/A2/T3/H2

Home: All arid scrublands and grasslands

Encounter Chance: Probable

Group Size: 1

Organization: Solitary

Niche: Herbivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

Great Tudd Game Data

STR 20	(d4+18)	INT 3	(Animal 4 or d6)
DEX 3	(d4)	WIL 14	(d4+12)
CON 22	(d4+20)	PER 4	(Animal 8 or d6+3)
Durability: 22/22/11/11		Action check: 11+/10/5/2	
Move: sprint 30, run 22, walk 6		#Actions: 1	
Reaction score: Marginal/1			

Attacks

Ram	14/7/3	d6+1s/d8+2s/d4w	L/G
Trample	10/5/2	2d4s/2d4w/2d4+2w	L/G

Defenses

+3 resistance modifier to melee attacks

-1 resistance modifier to ranged attacks

Armor: d6+2 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6 (En)

Skills

Unarmed Attack [20], Movement [22], Stamina [22]—endurance [24], resist pain [25], Awareness [14]—intuition [15], Resolve [14]—physical [15].



scarcity of food on the wastelands of Sennacherib. With the rapacious swarmings of the kenjir sak flies, fertile pasture is at a minimum, and the great tudds have learned to drive off not only their smaller cousins, but also other great tudds, in order to ensure their survival. This tactic also serves to cull the old and weak from the population, leaving more food for the others.

The lack of an adequate food supply is probably all that keeps the

great tudds from breeding in such numbers that their behavior jeopardizes their ecology. Signs are popping up already that the lesser tudd are losing their strongest representatives to the aggression of the great tudds, while the weaker ones do not survive the lean times after the kenjir sak flies come. Add to all these factors that the great tudds eat even the dried husks of the dead insects, and in all likelihood the lesser tudd will die out within another few thousand years.

Kenjir Sak Flies

"Kenjir sak" is a frail expression for an easily avoided pest that can become dangerous if ignored. The kenjir sak fly of Sennacherib is an innocuous pest, taken singly. Its sting is mildly irksome but hardly harmful.

But a kenjir sak fly is never alone. They congregate in small swarms of up to a thousand resembling a togake patch of fuzzy darkness. Even this sort of grouping is generally an avoidable danger so long as one does not stumble through the midst of the swarm.

The kenjir sak fly becomes a major hazard just after a mating season when literally millions of eggs hatch. Thousands of times the size of the swarm that spawned it, the newly hatched swarm scours the land for sustenance. The swarm strips vegetation to the root, stings living animals to death, feasts on the corpses, and lays even more eggs in the carcasses. It can clog mechanical intakes, disrupt electronic communication, and blot out the sun.

Description: An individual specimen is unremarkable. Possessed of two distinct pairs of wings that are set approximately 1 centimeter apart on its short body, it primarily travels by flying, but it can also walk on its two rearward-thrusting legs. It has a smaller set of legs near its proboscis, but it uses these only for clinging to a perch while it eats or stings. Its segmented eyes are set bilaterally on its head. The entire fly is just over 4 centimeters long and has a wingspan of 8 centimeters. It weighs less than a kilogram.

Encounter: A small swarm of kenjir sak flies is generally only encountered near a source of food such as a living plant or a dead animal. The swarm only attacks a living creature if no other food exists within 10 meters. The statistics given here are for a single swarm of a thousand or so flies. Such large swarms are unfortunately common, especially where food is plentiful. In these circumstances, the swarm attacks anything and everything. While a living creature is within this cloud of pestilence, it is subject to two sting attacks every round.

What the flies cannot sting into quiescence, they blanket in a squirming mass that is searching for food. They foul exposed machinery, clog intake vents, and double the mass of a given object. A living being blanketed in this fashion receives an encumbrance modifier as if it were carrying over twice and up to four its weight. It has its movement rate reduced to 75% of normal. It also has a +1 step penalty to all actions related to Strength- and Dexterity-based skills. It suffers a -1 step penalty to its Strength and Dexterity resistance modifiers. A vehicle so blanketed has its acceleration, cruising speed, and maximum speed halved.

Such a swarm also blocks radio communication and jams sensor scans (+2 step penalty to System Operation-communication and sensors checks). Even normal Awareness-perception skill checks receive a +2 step penalty due to the thickness of the swarm. Respirator masks are completely useless in the swarm. Soft e-suits break down after d4+2 hours of exposure. Smoke is the best weapon

Kenjir Sak Flies Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 2

GRAPH: G3/R2/A2/P3/K2

Habits: Any except arctic or open sea

Encounter Chance: Possible

Group Size: 100-1,200 (10d12x10)

Organization: Swarm

Niche: Omnivores

Intelligence: Low-order animal

Kenjir Sak Flies Game Data

STR 2	(d4)	INT 1	(Animal 4 or d4+2)
DEX 8	(d4+4)	WIL 6	(d4+4)
CON 8	(d4+4)	PER 3	(Animal 8 or d4+8)
Durability: 3/8/4/4		Action check: 15+/14/7/3	
Move: fly 45, walk 3		#Actions: 3	
Reaction score: Good/2			

Attacks

Sting	8/3/1	d4/d4+1s/d4+2s	LI/O
Blanket	12/6/3	special	special

Defenses

Immune to damage from H1 weapons
 +2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +4 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: none (LI), none (HI), none (EX)

Skills

Unarmed [2]-brawl [6], Acrobatics [6]-fly [12], Stamina [8]-endurance [10].

against the swarm. It clears an area d6+10 meters wide around the source of the smoke.

Habitat/Society: Kenjir sak flies are creatures of instinct. They eat, they mate, they lay eggs, and they die. They are most common in the grassy areas of Sennacherib's wastelands but can also be found in smaller numbers in the swamps of the moon's coastal zones and in even smaller numbers in the foothills of the planet's mountainous region.

The kenjir sak fly is an important part of Sennacherib's ecology. The flies keep the tudd and great tudd populations in check by denying them sufficient food supplies. But were they to be transplanted to another world, they would devastate the ecology within a few short years. For this reason, ships leaving the moon must be quarantined for as long as it takes to sterilize every surface.



CAMBRIA II

Cambria is a K5 orange star surrounded by five planets and an asteroid belt. The system has seen only the briefest of surveys during in the early days of Verge exploration, and only one of its planets showed any signs of life. All the others were vaguely interesting only for their rather mundane mineralogical resources. The second planet's hazards resulted in the system's quarantined status despite keen scientific interest in any life-bearing world. The system remains devoid of much of interest except to those archaeologists and less scrupulous big game hunters drawn by the legends of Cambria to see the 'Dinosaur Planet' for themselves.

With the recent encounters with the madurr and the revelation of their colony on Cambria II, interest in Cambria among the stellar nations and the Concord has reached a fever pitch. Future grants for reexploration and for biological cataloguing are likely to be approved by the CSS. The Kepler gained much of the data on Cambria and its inhabitants via videocaptures and incomplete bioscans presented to the Concord by the madurr. —**MS, CLA**

Cambria II/ Marvystarkoi

Parent: Cambria, K5
Orbital Radius: 0.85 AU
Orbital Period: 252.7 days
Rotation Period: 27.1 hours
Axial Tilt: Moderate (22.5°)
Diameter: 30,413 km
Density (Earth=1): 0.90

Surface Gravity: 1.18 g
Atmosphere: CO₂, N₂, O₂
Pressure: 4.18 atm
Median Temperature: 37.2° C
Satellites: Four
GRAFM: G2/R1/A2/T4/H3

Cambria II, or the Dinosaur Planet, as more sensational folk label it, presents visitors with an image of Earth's prehistoric past. The greenhouse effect creates a thick, stifling blanket of air mildly poisonous to humans due to the high incidence of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Only slightly larger than Earth but much hotter, Cambria II's four continents and three major oceans teem with life on a grand scale. While puzzling to scientists, who expected smaller plant and animal lifeforms, this world's gigantic natives fill the jungles, mountains, and marshes.

In the first wave of colonization in the Verge, settlers who came to Cambria built a colony among the higher mountain valleys. From accounts recently recovered from the derelict habitat shelters, the initial explorers underestimated the savagery of a few of Cambria II's huge predators. Despite having far superior weapons and technology, they fell victim to the huge predators. Though the settlers tried to flee the planet, argents latched onto their grounded ships and damaged them to such an extent that they could not fly. Once trapped, the colonists eventually became food for the unrelenting carnivores.

With the end of the independent colony, Cambria II stayed a relative secret for over a century, preserved only in the legends of the Dinosaur Planet. What we now know of this planet comes mainly from the madurr, who established a colony on the planet's surface decades ago during the Long Silence of the Verge. The madurr have shared some of their knowledge as part of a cultural exchange with the Concord. Apart from their technology and the fact that other species of intelligent creatures serve them, some might mistake the madurr for Cambrian natives. Sensors can and have easily located the madurr colony on the largest continent, but any sensor sweep of the planet also alerts two brier ships (see Appendix Daa: The Madurr) in orbit around Cambria II.

Cambria II

Marvystarkol

Tark loosely translates as "claim, stake, or territory," or more broadly in medurr speech (when a lateral tail lash is added) as "claimed world." *Mar* is a medurr word or prefix for "home" or "base," which are interchangeable given the military nature of medurr life. Thus, Marvystarkol, the name by which all medurr call Cambria II, designates it as the first system (claimed home base) of Clan Vys territory.

The medurr have made little effort to hide their presence. The medurr colony occupies mountain plateaus across three of the continents in the northern hemisphere. A total of seven separate colony domes connect to different mountain cavern complexes. These colony plateaus would be considered separate cities by any other species, and they do have local names given to them by their leaders. No matter how many or how far apart the separate plateaus are, though, easy travel using skysleds and partially domesticated prenapar mounts keep the colony plateaus unified. As far as the medurr are concerned, the entire planet is one single colony under the rule of Matriarch Tolvys and her *aahn* brood. (See Appendix One: The Medurr for more information on medurr social structure, hierarchies, and titles.)

The domes provide security for the cavern entrances and stable placement for moisture collectors, landing pads, a garrison of *graahn* troops, and other amenities not transferable into the caves. The caves form living and storage spaces. Each plateau supports and houses a population of nearly 5,000 persons. These are mainly slaves, since no more than 600 medurr live on any given plateau. The tunnels and subterranean complexes beneath the plateaus provide

miles of additional space in which the medurr can settle comfortably without encroaching on each other's space. In general, *graahn* troops remain in surface barracks or on patrol, while many *train* have taken to solitary lives out on the planetary plains, jungles, and lowlands.

Four more plateau colonies are currently under construction. These new facilities will allow the younger *aahn* to rule on a small scale. The new colonies will further disperse the medurr and prevent conflicts among the males.

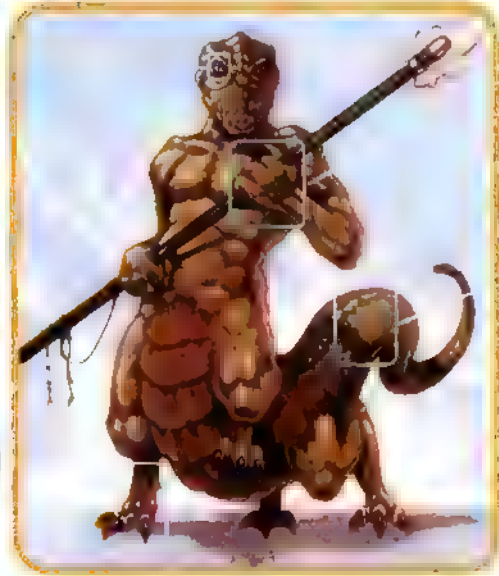
The placement of the colony domes avoids the equatorial nesting grounds of the argents. It also allows the medurr easy access to the plains for hunting. They can reach the plains in mere hours by skysled, or in two days on foot with a hike down through the mountains. While the colony domes spread across three continents, the fourth and smallest continent (which also happens to straddle the equator along much of its length) remains unsettled except for *dhamrin* technicians and a garrison of *graahn*.

Matriarch Tolvys and five other adult *aahn* rule six of the colony plateaus. In accordance with the traditions of the Imperium, the senior *aahn* always dedicates a ceremonial place for the Aahnorum (the council of eleven matriarchs who help the empress to rule the medurr) to meet, should it choose to visit. This structure dominates the seventh colony plateau. It serves as a temple and as a palace for visiting grand matriarchs or the empress herself. Visits from the Imperium are rare, and thus the palace—a grand structure that is over 300 meters on each side with impressive domes and spires carved of native rock—is still incomplete after more than thirty years of construction. Under Matriarch Tolvys's ultimate authority, the *aahn* coordinate rulership and development of this dome between them.

Vysol Star Rift

Circling Cambria in an orbital path between that star's first two planetary bodies is a star rift. Known details on star rifts are scant, though the medurr proudly discuss how the rifts allow them military and tactical superiority over the *Ikol*. They hint at the supremacy over the stellar nations. From vague data and some corroboration by *dhamrin* technicians, star rifts are surrounded by orbital platforms shaped like arches, ancient Earth horseshoes, or full circles. A star rift forms at the center of the open area. Through unknown methods, it forms an artificial wormhole through which two points are directly linked. Regardless of the distances between them, travel between the rifts happens nearly instantaneously. Star rift arrays bristle with typical barbed medurr metal structures and towers of unknown function, though many are assumed to be defensive structures, weapons, or sensor platforms.

The few Concord scientists with whom the medurr have discussed this technology have only theoretical constructs with which to compare these star rifts. For this reason, humanity and the other species of the stellar nations have yet to understand how star rifts function. The medurr prefer it that way. They act to preserve the secrets of this tantalizing technology as best they can. However, they seem as interested in mass reactors, stardrives, and mass weaponry as the Concord is in zero-point energy and star rift technology. Because of this, possibilities exist for diplomatic ties and technological exchanges to be made in the future, though not until after 2503.



REAR VIEW



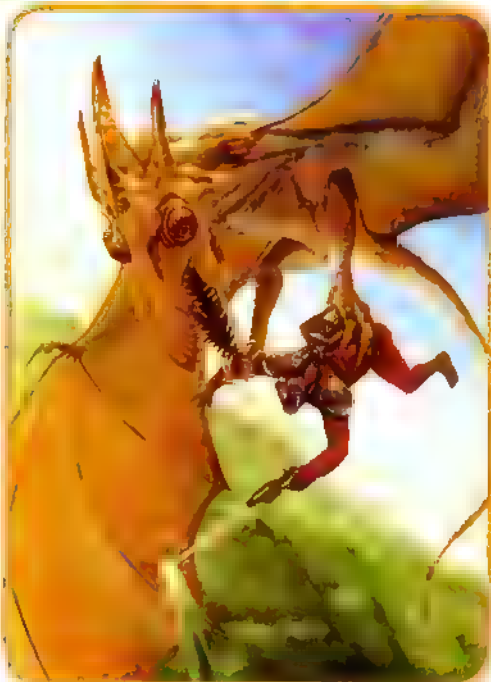
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Argent

The shining, dazzling effect that this large aerial creature's sun-drenched scales has on first-time viewers established its name. The white- and gold-scaled creature most closely resembles a pteranodon of Earth's past, though its toothed beak and scalloped wings and such comparisons quickly Argents (and about one hundred other species on Cambria II) reach upward of 80 kilograms in weight but still fly because the planet's thick atmosphere allows for avians larger than those found on Earth and other planets.

Argents are found primarily in the equatorial skies and those of the southern hemisphere. They fly only during the daytime and retreat to mountain or treetop nests at dusk. They never leave the nest at night unless forced out, which makes night flights on Cambria II safer propositions than those attempted during the day.

Description: The argent is the most numerous and noticeable of the aerial raptors and predators in the skies above Cambria II. Its wingspan reaches 6 to 7 meters. Its long two-legged body rarely exceeds 2.5 meters. A soarer and long-distance flier by nature, the argent has vestigial claws along its wings, though it seizes its prey mainly with its serrated, toothed beak and its massive leg claws. Its mirrorlike hide consists of light golden to silvery white scales that



Argent Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 2

GNAPM: G2/R1/A2/P4/H3

Habits: Aerial temperate and tropical zones

Encounter Chance: Possible

Group Size: 2–12 (2d6)

Organization: Mated pairs and small family groups

Niche: Predator (carnivore)

Intelligence: High-order animal

Argent Game Data

STR 13 (d8+8) INT 3 (Animal 5 or d4+2)

DEX 12 (2d4+9) WIL 10 (d4+2)

CON 12 (2d4+7) PER 2 (Animal 4 or d4+1)

Durability: 12/12/6/6 Action check: 12+/11/5/2

Movs: walk 6, fly 80 #Actions: 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Bite 14/7/3 d6s/d4+1w/d6w LL/0

Claw (x2) 14/7/3 d4+1s/d4w/d4+1w LL/0

Dazzle 12/6/3 d6s/2d4+2s/2d6s Ea/0

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: d4 (L), d4–2 (H), d4 (En)

Skills

Unarmed [13]–brawl [14], Acrobatics [12]–climb [15],

Stealth [12]–shadow [14], Stamina [12]–endurance [15],

Awareness [10]–perception [17],

can resist energy weapons nearly as well as body armor. On either side of its skull, large eyes rotate independently, granting it a 300° field of vision.

Encounter: Unlike many other natives of the planet, argents are day hunters. They roam far afield for their food. Unless they are flying over the open plains and prey is obvious and looks easy to catch, they prefer flying creatures over earthbound prey. Their favored quarry is beings from half to two-thirds of their size, and they are known to prefer the six-legged thorn and the palaf (see Appendix One: The Medurr) as food. They have little fear of large numbers of creatures, loud noises, or bright lights, but they immediately flee on taking any wounds unless defending their territory.

Argents hunt tirelessly, sometimes flying for more than half a day in pursuit of prey. They attack first by grabbing and clawing with their hind claws. Once they have downed their quarry, argents wing their way to the nearest high point and feed immediately, using their toothed and serrated maw to tear open the hide of anything from a Takma rat to a medurr. Typical tactics include swooping in and snatching prey on the fly. Argents are noiseless fliers, though they unleash a loud screech as they attack that often startles their prey and makes it easier to catch (providing one brief moment of horror for intelligent prey). They also intuitively uses their highly reflective



scaled hide to blind and stun prey as well to prevent any opponents from swooping out of the sun toward their only blind spots.

Argents often attack reflective materials, whether they are metallic or plastic or glass that has caught the light. They instinctively take these objects to be other argents that are challenging their territory or competing with them for prey. Any starships or skycares flying through Cambria II's lower atmosphere come under attack despite their size. Argents mistake their metallic hulls for a competitive argent's scaled hide.

Habitat Society Argents are oviparous carnivores. Their young grow to maturity in seven months after hatching. Argents are found only in mated pairs or in limited family units until the young leave the nest. They fiercely protect their territory and their young. Argents consider any area within a kilometer of their nests their

territory and defend it ardently against all creatures.

Through information gained from the medurr and the dhamrin studies of the colony wreckage as well as their own experiences, the dhamrin (see Appendix One: The Medurr) formed the following hypothesis for the end of the Cambrian colony: The argents, due to their natural instincts, attacked the colony ships into unspace-worthiness. The argents rarely attacked the colony unless there was reflective meta. on any part of its buildings. The huge avians dove at the reflective parts of the starships on their rock landing pads constantly however, screaming to frighten their foes and clawing at bulkheads, viewports, and any other parts that reflected the sunlight. While they fled if they wounded themselves, the argents still did enough damage over time to gradually run the ships out of spare parts, forcing them into conditions where they could not fly.



From what our archaeozoologists can determine, the cambryonyx combines the worst aspects of Earth's long-extinct velociraptor and tyrannosaurus rex, making it one of the most deadly predators yet catalogued in the Verge. Luckily, the creatures have little intelligence beyond being cunning hunters. —AV, CSS

Description This massive bipedal theropod is one of the major predators of the lowlands of Cambria II. At an average of 12 meters long from nose to wry tail and 3,000 kilograms in weight, cambryonyxes are the largest of the pack hunters. The cambryonyx ranks as the fiercest predator, pound for pound, on Cambria II. By using its massive tail as a counterbalance, the mottled, brown-skinned predator moves quickly for its size. Its curiously shaped mouth seems hare-lipped but its cleft nose and chin allow it to have a pointed head

Cambryonyx Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series 1

Environment: Class 2

GRAPE: 62/71/42/74/73

Waters: Temperate and tropical lowland plains and foothills

Encounter Chance: Possible

Group Size: 2-8 (2d4)

Organization: Pack

Niche: Carnivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

with more teeth with which to grip prey. While a cambryonyx's forelegs are short, its foreclaws sink into and hold prey after the reptile seizes it in its jaws.

Encounter: Cambryonyxes most often hunt in packs of three to six. They seek out herds of herbivores and other prey. Often one cambryonyx pushes toward the prey animals in an obvious manner, agitating them and causing them to flee toward its waiting accomplices. Cambryonyxes rarely attack more than four times their number at a time unless the prey creatures are a great deal smaller than they are. The only exception is prenapars, which they commonly hunt by startling the herd and then stalking the weak and the slow.

A cambryonyx attacks with its jaws first, since its loping gait forces its head forward during the chase. It cannot attack with its claws unless its prey is pinned in its jaws. If it hits with its bite, its target is pinned in addition to sustaining the indicated bite damage. The pinned target has a step penalty to escape attempts depending on the degree of success of the bite attack: a +1 step penalty for an Ordinary success, a +2 step penalty for a Good success, and a +3 step penalty for an Amazing success. An Athletics, Unarmed Attack, *brawl*, or Acrobatics *dodge* skill check can be used to try to escape.

While its prey is pinned, the cambryonyx has two options. Its first choice is to simply use its foreclaws to further savage its prey. In this case, it makes two normal claw attacks. The second choice is to use one claw to hold the prey while chewing and ripping. In this case, the cambryonyx makes two attacks, but the degree of success of the better of the two attacks indicates a penalty for escape attempts as

Cambryonyx Game Data

STR 20	(2d4+15)	INT 4	(Animal 12 or d12+5)
DEX 10	(2d4+5)	WIL 11	(2d4+5)
CON 20	(2d6+15)	PER 2	(Animal 8 or 2d6+1)
Durability:	20/20/10/10	Action check:	10+/3/5/2
Moves:	sprint 50, run 30, walk 16	#Actions:	3
Reaction score:	Ordinary/2		

Attacks

Bite ¹	20/10/5	2d4+1w/2d6w/d5+1m	11/6
Claws (x2) ²	20/10/5	d6+1w/d4w/2d4w	11/6
Tail lash	20/10/5	d6s/d12s/d6w	11/6

¹ Can pin, see text

² Can pin, see text

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: d4+2 (L), d4+2 (H), d4-1 (E)

Skills

Unarmed [20]—*brawl* [21], Stealth [10], Movement [20]—*race* [25], Stamina [20]—*endurance* [24], Awareness [11]—*intuition* [12], perception [12], Investigation [11]—*search* [12], Resolve [11]—*physical* [12].



for a bite. If both claw attacks in an attempt to hold a previously bitten and pinned target succeed, the target is now pinned in the foreclaws, is released by the mouth, and is susceptible to another bite. If only one succeeds, minimal claw damage for one claw is inflicted instead, and the target remains held in the cambryonyx's mouth. However, the step penalty for escaping the mouth decreases by one step for each unsuccessful attempt the cambryonyx makes to pin the target in its foreclaws. (No bonus can accrue, only the penalty is eliminated.)

Habitat/Society: Cambryonyxes form packs of from one to six males in addition to their males and offspring. All the members of a pack share shelter on the floor of forests or within shallow caves. Male cambryonyxes spend more than two-thirds of the day within the lair, leaving it to hunt during the afternoon and dusk hours. The equally vicious females are responsible for protecting their lairs and the young and infirm, though when enough females exist in a pack to both guard and hunt, many females hunt with the males. Cam-

bryonyxes have no discernible language beyond animalistic growls, hisses, and roars.

A female cambryonyx lays up to three eggs once or twice a year. All the females of the pack place their eggs together, allowing one female to incubate and protect all the pack's young while others hunt or protect their territory. Once hatched, a cambryonyx grows to full size within a year and either successfully challenges the eldest to leadership of the pack—either gender can lead a pack—or is driven out to found or join another pack.

The greatest threats to cambryonyxes are even larger solitary predators. The khainothar, what the medurr call a large two-headed reptilian carnivore, seem to be their species enemy (as well as an honored foe of the khain medurr). A khainothar looms over a cambryonyx at an astounding 20 meters in length, and its razor-edged scales and massive jaws can seize and rip a cambryonyx in half. Other hunting rivals include the equal-sized, camouflaged struthar lizards and the small teramiths (loosely translated as "swarm cats") that stalk prey and swarm over it in packs of 12 or more.

Prenapar

What footage we've seen of prenapars consists of their herds fleeing in terror from cambryonyx attacks or medurr patrols. Thus, while some brief notes may be extrapolated about their behavior, we cannot draw many conclusions about their interaction with their ecosystem without further study.—**AV, CSS**

Bipedal pack dwellers of Cambria II's plains and foothills, prenapars look like great blue wingless birds. They constantly peck at the ground for food while they whistle and trumpet to each other. Docile to the point that they are easily domesticated as mounts, prenapars are one of Cambria II's most abundant dinosaurid species.



Prenapar Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 2

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P4/K3

Moves: Temperate and tropical plains, foothills, and littoral regions

Encounter Chance: Probable

Group Size: 6-120 (6d20)

Organization: Herd

Niche: Omnivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

Description: A prenapar stands in a crouch. Its eye level is about 3 meters, though its body length averages around 10 meters, with its mass falling around 2,000 kilograms. The prenapar's most prominent feature is its arrowhead-shaped skull, which has a high-domed concave cranium with an external ridge that is sometimes horned. Prenapars seem relatively docile and are content to roam throughout any terrain. They run quickly to avoid predators. Prenapar hides vary from a brilliant cornflower to darker midnight blue. The shade and quality of prenapar leather is evidently appealing to the medurr, since the medurr hunt them, kill them, and tan their hides, which are made into harnesses, cloaks, and belts.

Encounter: Prenapars under attack always flee, following the pack leader without exception. The medurr have learned from cambry-onyx tactics to either attack the flanks of a prenapar herd (when on foot) or divert the pack leader, when attacking from skylands. If cornered, prenapars attack by using their heads to smash at targets. They also can leap out of some traps, springing to great heights using their powerful hind legs and tails. These same powerful limbs can deliver serious damage to a target near a prenapar if it is panicked.

Finding prenapar packs is not difficult, since they whistle and screech like a flock of birds. Prenapars are loud and smart only in the sense that their whistles and calls are differentiated to broadcast feelings such as fear, hunger, and contentment. Dhamrinni accounts of the sound made by a sleeping prenapar pack call it "a most soothing collective snore punctuated by peculiar low whistles that can lull you to sleep."

Habitat Society: One of Cambria II's few omnivores, prenapars use their wedge-shaped skulls and horns to root for small burrowing mammals, worms, and slugs, to crack enormous nuts, to loosen root structures, and to pull up and consume grasses or whole shrubs. During the mating season, they use their flat, thick skulls in head-butting contests to determine a pecking order and mating rights. Once this is determined, though, prenapars mate for life. Their offspring often remain with the herd, which easily grows into the hundreds. Given the amount of food a prenapar herd eats and the destruction it leaves in its wake as its members root through the ground, it is impossible to not see where a herd has been. Prenapar herds remain on the move at all times, migrating to any terrain that provides food for them.



Prenapar Game Data

STR 18	(d6+12)	INT 3	(Animal 9 or 2d8)
DEX 16	(d6+12)	WIL 9	(2d4+4)
CON 17	(d4+14)	PER 2	(Animal 10 or 2d8+1)

Durability: 17/17/6/0 Action check: 16+/15/7/3
 Moves: sprint 70, run 42, walk 18, (jump 16) #Actions: 3
 Reaction score: Good/2

Attacks

Head butt	17/6/4	d6s/2d4s/d4w	LI/E
Kick (x2)	8/4/2	d8s/2d4w/d12w	LI/E
Tail slam	8/4/2	d6+2s/d8+4s/d4+1w	LI/E

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor: d4-2 (LI/HI/EA)

Skills

Unarmed Combat [16]-brawl [17]; Acrobatics [16]-dodge [19]; Movement [17]-race [21]; Stamina [17]-endurance [19]; Awareness [9]-intuition [12]; perception [10]; Resolve [9]-physical [10].

DANWELL

After several previous dry and inaccurate reports about the Eldale system, independent explorers rediscovered the system less than two years ago and discovered that one of its planets, Danwell, was neither the frigid sphere described in previous reports nor uninhabited. Danwell is home to a native sentient species. Emergency contact protocols set in place by the Concord have limited the damage done to a remarkable ecosystem of abundant life since April 2502. Eldale and its three planets could prove to be a treasure trove for the Concord and its allies, especially with the presence of Precursor sites on Danwell that are believed to have belonged to the ancient species known as the Glassmakers.

Among the edanwe, hints of previous activity by unknown offworld "Others" have marred the excitement over first encounters. According to accounts from former Concord marine Gabriel Connor and the *de facto* edanweir ambassador Tlalai, remarkable similarities exist between the Others that once came to Danwell and the kroath ships encountered in other Varge systems. Concord Administrator Lorand Kharis acts as the Concord's primary overseer for Eldale through the hands-on work of her assistant, Field Administrator Steve Hood (Hm/Concord/DFA-3). She and Administrator Rick Carter now correspond frequently about the Others. Administrator Carter has taken on the responsibility for coordinating all intelligence on the Externals. Carter's links to the first contacts with the medurr also allow him to crosscheck any intelligence gained from both new species and find any correlation in the data. (For more information on the Eldale system and its planets and inhabitants, see *Star Compendium: Systems of the Varge*.)

Like *Angia*, the relatively unspoiled world of Danwell could eventually become a desirable planet in the Varge for tourists and vacationers. Danwell is a Class 1 world suitable for human habitation, but the Concord currently prevents much interference with it or interaction with the natives by anyone not authorized by the Concord Chancery on the planet. Danwell features unspoiled spectacles such as a famous 3-kilometer-high waterfall (known as the Downfall) and miles of lowland forests uninterrupted except by a few scattered edanweir villages or the odd, unimpeachable, triangular buildings left by the Precursors. Previously thought to be a barren ice world, Danwell proved to be warmer than it had been surveyed, though even its equatorial zones only prove to have temperate climates. Land covers more than 80% of the planet's surface. High mountain chains, ridges, and deep valleys divide its five major landmasses. It has no large oceans, though its surface is dotted by a number of inland seas, lakes, and rivers. Storms brought on by the perturbations in the wind patterns, combined with yearly snowmelt runoff, provide enough water recycling for the biosphere's flora and fauna.

Danwell

Parent: Eldale, G0	Surface Gravity: 0.85 g
Orbital Radius: 1.20 AU	Atmosphere: N ₂ , O ₂
Orbital Period: 457.8 days	Pressure: 0.9 atm
Rotation Period: 28.2 hours	Median Temperature: 5° C
Axial Tilt: Severe (34.5°)	Satellites: Two
Diameter: 11,053 km	GRAPE: G2/R1/A2/F3/H2
Density (Earth=1): 0.98	

Edanwe

Many watch the ongoing initial tentative cultural exchanges with the edanweir and wish that the assimilation of the seshevyans into the interstellar community had gone as well. The edanweir have some technology and a basic understanding that other intelligent beings exist beyond their planet. However their main interests lie in getting food stores laid in by winter and protecting themselves from the vile experiments and interference of the Others.

Description While they have seen holograms and actual representative teddy bears, the edanweir fail to see why so many humans think they resemble these fuzzy push toys. They tolerate the reference for now. Edanweir are humanoids that stand just a meter and a half tall and are covered in coppery or reddish fur over most of their bodies. Adults weigh approximately 65 kilograms. They have bushy tails 30 to 70 centimeters in length that are most commonly



striped with red and white fur. An edanwe's face has thinner fur of a white or cream color everywhere except around its muzzle, where the fur is dark red, and it has stripes that roughly correspond in location to a human's eyebrows. Their noses are bare flesh of a red or copper tone, as are the palms of their hands and each hand's five fingers and two opposable thumbs. Their lips are thin and their teeth sharp and white. They have small, mobile round ears and keen, bright, curious eyes.

Edanwe wear long decorative vests during the summer and winter months, and during the winter they supplement these with heavy embroidered cloaks and other clothes made from kitlee hide. The edanweir language is a mixture of phonetic and tonal growls, barks, and body language, supplemented heavily by their telepathic bonding ability. Edanwe a difficult tongue to master.

Encounter: No one has taken an edanwe unaware, at least by Concord accounts. But as Gabriel Connor discovered during his initial meeting with them, the edanweir are more than capable of sneaking up on anyone. The keen hearing and incredible eyesight of these hunters allows them to pick the time, place, and manner in which they encounter others. Cautious by nature, edanweir usually hunt in trios or quintets, allowing them to surround most foes they encounter. However, they can be daring solitary sharpshooters when they have the urge. Edanweir usually possess knives but rarely use them in attacks, preferring to fire their rifles. Edanweir hunt by stalking prey, with each hunter keeping quietly to himself or herself until ready to strike.

Edanwe Game Data

Note: These statistics reflect a nonprofessional edanwe hunter living and working in one of Danwell's villages. Just as with humans, most edanweir are not hero-class characters.

STA 9	(2d4+4)	INT 9	(2d6+2)
DEX 11	(2d4+6)	WIL 10	(3d4+2)
CON 9	(2d4+3)	PER 8	(d8+3)

Durability: 9/8/4/4 Action check: 11+/10/5/2

Move: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4 #Actions: 2

Reaction score: Marginal/1 Last resort: 1

Psionic energy points: 5

Flaws: Phobia (4 points—afraid of being alone), Primitive (4 points), Temper (4 points—becomes angry or violent in the continued company of more than 100 edanwe).

Attacks

Unarmed	9/4/2	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s	LI/0
Rifle ¹	12/6/3	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m	HL/0

¹ Treat edanweir weapons as the 31 ball rifle described in Chapter 9; Weapons and Armor in the *Player's Handbook*.

Defenses

no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. psionic attacks
no INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
no WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
Armor: none (LB), none (HD), none (Ex)

Skills

Athletics [5], Unarmed Attack [5], Modern [11]—rifle [12], Movement [5], Survival [5], Knowledge [5], Awareness¹ [10]—perception [12], Resolve [10]—mental [11], Investigate [10]—track [12], Interaction [5], Telepathy [5]—conduct [10].

¹ -1 step bonus to Awareness checks involving vision.



While edanweir exhibit the usual range of catalysts that incite violence from them, they have one response some find unusual. If a mindwalker enters the mind of an edanwe without invitation or permission, the entire community knows of it instantly. The community's immediate impulse is to punish the invader for the crime of *mewesh* (mental defilement). The standard punishment for committing *mewesh* is death. (The Concord requires any mindwalkers visiting Danwell to swear an oath that they will not engage in any form of unsolicited mental contact with edanweir. Any one violating that stricture is subject to Danwell's justice.) This harsh reaction grew from the damage and corruption once visited on the edanweir by the Others long ago. The edanweir now understand that not all mindwalkers are so cavalier and ruthless with their abilities as the Others. However, none of them can shake their ingrained distaste for another being's mental touch except that granted through edanweir bonding.

Habitat Society. Edanweir society follows simple communal patterns on a broad scale: share the wealth of the community with others according to their needs. Each individual community follows the will of its Elder, though it gives some authority to its hunters and some advisors. When decisions need to be made for the community, all of its members assemble in the village hall to decide collectively. The Elder also serves as a representative to the hundreds of other edanweir communities that are scattered across Danwell's equatorial regions. Though they maintain periodic high frequency radio contact with other edanweir villages, they tend to communicate with others only in times of need, such as during food shortages, droughts, fierce winter storms, or cdfworlders arrivals.

All edanweir have latent telepathic abilities. These lead to a number of interesting features about the edanweir found in no other cultures thus far. They do not collect in numbers beyond about one

Edanwe Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

EXAFM: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Homes: All temperate and equatorial lands

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 1-6 (d6)

Organization: Communal hierarchy

Niche: Advanced hunter

Intelligence: Telepathic sentient

hundred or so in one place; they have an unconscious tendency to mentally bond as a community. Edanweir in crowded conditions among more than one hundred edanweir must make *Resolve-mental resolve* skill checks to offset the ill effects of being among too many minds. Otherwise, they grow quarrelsome and even violent with increasing exposure. Likewise, any edanwe isolated from all of his kind must also make *Resolve-mental resolve* skill checks to prevent the onset of a mental illness that begins in loneliness and ends in suicide.

Edanweir mate for life. The psychic bonds between mates are intimate and far stronger than those with the rest of the community. Rarely, these pair bonds sometimes arise in close partnerships such as those between childhood friends and hunting partners. A few nomedanwe have mentally bonded with the edanweir, either by accident, as in Gabriel Connor's place, or on purpose (most commonly

exhibited among linguists trying to learn their language). The Concord has grown concerned with this phenomenon as it tends to affect folk with no previous psionic ability who remain with the edanweir for long periods of time.

The other unique psionic talents exhibited by the edanweir are among the child-seers, the *mahlahnwe'ir yabain*. Prescient beyond belief, about three edanwe children in a generation are born with this ability. The Elders view the child-seers as a reflection of the edanweir psychic bonding being given a voice through the most innocent, and thus the most pure, of edanweir. Child-seers are prophetic in their early years, but these abilities fade over time. For game purposes, a newborn child-seer has ESP with twelve ranks each in all its specialty skills except for *battle mind* and *navcognition*. The seer loses one rank in each specialty skill, per year, and the ESP broad skill then disappears one year all ranks are lost.

Edanweir artisanship is incredibly painstaking and evident in nearly everything found in the villages and on its peoples. It is observed in everything from the elaborately carved stocks of edanweir weapons to their decorated vests to their everyday eating and cooking implements, all of which are carved, painted or embroidered with leaves, flowers, and animal forms. Cottonlike fabric is woven in most villages, but heavy and sturdy clothing is made of kitiete hide. As a society in the industrial age (FL4), the edanweir have access to guns, radio communications, and rudimentary air transportation. The Elders of each community limit access to the latter two technologies to themselves. While they are not completely certain of it, the Concord observers believe that the radio and airship technology comes from the mysterious Others who once visited Danweil.



Among the largest creatures on Danweil are the semibovine kitiete. Like the caribou and buffalo were to certain peoples of Old Earth, kitietes are the staple animals around which edanweir life revolves. They are ill-tempered, and their tendency to become angry and charge is a prime reason why the edanweir may have developed ranged weapons—to deal with them from a distance. Unfortunately, despite all precautions and advances in weaponry, kitiete herds continue to claim the lives of many edanweir.

Description Weighing in at 800 kilograms or more and standing 2 meters at the shoulder these 4-meter-long bespecks thunder across the lowlands and hills of Danweil in herds of thousands. The bulk of a kitiete's mass centers at its head and foreshoulders, and its body tapers toward the rear. Its legs are thick, and its hooves are split into three toes. Its massive head is set low along its shoulders to aid in grazing. Three horns adorn the bull kitiete: one above each eye and another on the snout. Kitiete cows lack the pair of horns over the eyes, though they are more easily spotted from afar due to a more pronounced nose horn that is equally dangerous in a charge. A kitiete's thick coat and hide afford it some protection from damage in a fight. Natural kitiete hides are all a uniform chestnut brown, though the edanweir dye them all sorts of hues.

Encounter Not even the edanweir fully understand the cause of the kitiete's skittishness and bad temper though they have learned to keep their distance. Kitiete identify intruders or challengers by scent and proximity, since they have relatively poor eyesight. If intruders

approach within 40 meters without being previously detected, kitietes charge directly for any nonkitiete scent. It is not unusual to find many trampled rodents in the waks of a kitiete herd. As at kitiete takes only two body lengths of movement to reach its full speed, targets need to make split-second decisions to avoid falling beneath their hooves or horns. Those crazy enough to approach a kitiete herd from upwind find the herd charging at them even from 500 meters off due to their strange scents.

Kitietes only use their horns as attacks of convenience when targets are large or are not trampled down in their first attacks. They most often use their horns during the late fall mating season when the bulls challenge each other for mating rights with the herd females. Kitiete belligerence rises to feverish intensity among the bulls during the mating season as they seek to protect the cows from predators and rivals. That same ill temper shows up in the cows when they seek to protect their young.

Habitat Society These animals have little society to speak of beyond herd instincts. Kitietes spend their simple lives wandering the grasslands and plains of Danweil while feeding on the abundant plant life. Kitiete calves are born in late spring and grow to maturity in six months.

When the winter settles in, food grows scarce and many kitietes die of starvation or cold. The largest herds rise to number in the thousands during the summer, darkening whole landscapes with their presence as they feed on any and all flora. In harsh winters, such herds can drop to only a quarter of their summer populations



Kitiete Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

ERAPM: 02/R1/A2/P3/K3

Habits: All temperate and equatorial lands

Encounter Chance: Possible

Group Size: 6-20 (2d8+4)

Organization: Herd

Niche: Large herbivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

Kitiete Game Data

STR 18 (2d4+13) INT 4 (Animal 7 or d4+3)
DEX 7 (d4+5) WIL 6 (d4+6)
CON 12 (2d4+7) PER 4 (Animal 10 or d4+7)
Durability: 12/12/6/6 Action check: 10+/9/4/2
Move: sprint 30, run 20, walk 4 #Actions: 2
Reaction score: Marginal/1

Attacks

Charge	19/9/4	d8+2s/d6+2w/d8+2w	L1/6
Horns	16/8/4	d4+1s/d4-1w/d4w	L1/0
Trample	16/8/4	d8s/d6w/d6+2w	L1/0

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d6 (L), d4-1 (H), d4 (En)

Skills

Unarmed (18) - *brand* (15), Movement (12) - *run* (14), *swim* (15),
Stamina (12) - *endurance* (16), *resist pain* (14), Awareness (8) -
intuition (10), perception (9), Reactive (8) - *physical* (10).

due to starvation or the inability to run in heavy snow to avoid mhwada herds and other predators

When stampeding or charging, three kitiete bulls direct the herd. The point bull is the leader, determining the direction and distance the herd travels. The two bulls on either outer front edge of the herd



define the edges of how wide a herd spreads during a stampede. Edanweir hunting for kitiete often target not the leader but one of the flanking bulls. The tactic confuses the herd and spreads it out, allowing the hunters to more easily choose targets that stray away from the pack. Not only does this help to protect the edanwe, it also reduces the likelihood that their kill become crushed beneath the hundreds of hooves coming along behind them.

ABRUMMI



While I've yet to see more than just preliminary data and a post-mortem report on these creatures, the mhwadas of Danwell are certainly creatures worthy of further study when next we return to Eldad. If nothing else, the CSS should study this creature to find ways to deter it from attacking hapless Concord diplomats. —AV, CSS

While the kitiete gain the lion's share of the attention from anthropologists and edanweir hunters, mhwadas sustain some small notoriety because they share a communal psionic talent just as the edanweir do. Mhwadas stand out among the carnivores and predators actually because these furred bundles of talons and teeth actually fly, to a limited extent, thanks to group psionics. These deadly creatures hunt in the air and on the ground. They are noisy in the extreme while attacking, and their growls and snarls build to roars when they finally take their prey.

Description Mhwadas weigh 25 kilograms and measure 60 to 75 centimeters in length. They show remarkable similarities to Terran badgers or wolverines. A mhwada has a squat body with short, strong legs, all six of which end in paws with claws. Its fur varies from black to light brown or ash gray, and it has white striping along its muzzle and head. Its loose skin provides it with some protection from predators by preventing easy purchase on anything vital when it is bitten. Add very powerful jaws to this description, and mhwadas are seen as the pernicious menaces that they are.

A mhwada is hexapedal, though its central limbs and hands have become what seem to be only wing struts and claws. The skin flaps that extend between a mhwada's fore and rear limbs allow it to glide like a flying squirrel. However, it only glides when alone. In a pack, mhwadas' collective telekinetic psionic ability allows them limited flight once a guide is initiated.

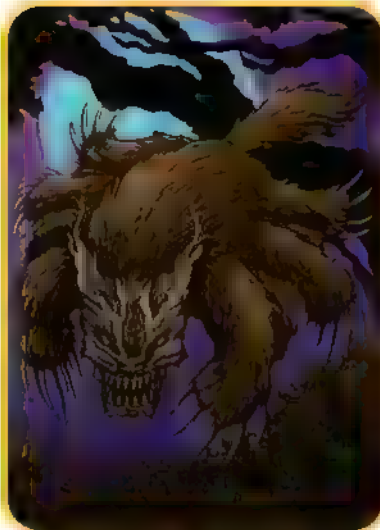
Encounter: Mhwadas stalk their prey by scent and by using their phenomena, eyesight. They can spot any moving creature of a half a meter or larger in size from 200 meters in the air and easily drop down to attack it. These creatures attack nearly anything that moves, including other predators if they are challenged. Mhwadas have been seen bringing down the vastly larger kitete both by dropping onto their backs. Differences in weight or size matter little to mhwadas, since these feisty predators attack anything they find annoying within a 3-meter radius of themselves. They have been seen killing prey nearly eight times their size.

The most common encounter with mhwadas happens when they swoop down from above, as they spend much time climbing to high points and leaping off to glide toward prey smelled on the wind or spotted a distance away. Individually, mhwadas can glide for up to a half round in a straight line. In groups of four or more, mhwadas have the ability to generate a telekinetic field that both reduces the effectiveness of ranged weapons used against them and allows the group to glide and fly. Except in the dead of winter when food is scarce, mhwadas hunt in flying packs of sufficient numbers to fly. Mhwada packs number up to twenty individuals. Large packs have been seen flying along and slashing at a kitete herd with their wing claws. They sometimes bring down as many as a dozen kitete before they drop to gorge themselves.

Once activated, a mhwada's telekinetic flight ability does not change in speed or maneuverability. Individually, gliding mhwadas attack with a +2 step penalty because of their linear flight path. This penalty doesn't apply if a mhwada is flying with a pack.

Mhwadas lead with at least two claw attacks and a bite, though larger prey can be engaged with four claws and a bite. Mhwadas seek the quickest way to disable prey so that it cannot escape them. Given this, they often attack the eyes, vulnerable arteries or organs, or try to hamstring their prey.

Whether flying, gliding, or walking when it contacts prey, once a mhwada engages, the only things that disengage it from the kill are more than 10 points of primary damage at any one time, the presence of a larger predator, or fire. It instinctively shies away from flame, which explains some of the bonfires set at the village squares of edenweir villages. Mhwadas have been known to stalk prey that escaped the initial encounter for days, waiting for it to slow or drop. Unless more promising prey drops immediately into their paths, mhwadas do not commonly give up on a kill unless they are killed themselves.



Habitat Society Mhwadas are intelligent animals with a complex social structure. Like wolves, a dominant male leads the pack, and each mhwada in the pack knows its place in pack hierarchy. Mhwada packs communicate by posture, growls, flight patterns, and scent. The pack collectively hunts for the everyone, and if a lone mhwada lands prey others of its pack howl and roar to draw the rest of the pack to hunt or har.

While only the pack leader mates with the pack females, the whole pack rears the pups of the pack leader and the females. Mhwadas den high up in mountain caves or among foothills. The females pick the lairs, often seeking higher ground from which to glide down from and some measure of shelter from the elements and other predators.

Mhwadas gorge themselves on a kill, eating their equivalent body mass, if not more, before bating. Mothers feed many times at a kill, returning to their dens to regurgitate food for their pups. Mhwadas tear and swallow large chunks of their prey whole. Their digestive process is not too caustic, as rings, jewelry, and bits of clothing survive in their droppings. This occasionally allows folk a way to determine the fate of any unfortunate friends who suddenly go missing on Danwell.

Mhwada Game Data

STR 11	(2d4+7)	INT 3	(Animal 10 or d12+3)
DEX 13	(2d4+9)	WIL 12	(d4+9)
CON 10	(2d9+1)	PER 5	(Animal 12 or d12+5)
Durability: 10/10/5/5			
Move: sprint 24, run 16, walk 6, glide 26, fly 52#Actions: 2			
Reaction score: Ordinary/2			

Attacks

Bite	14/7/3	d6s/d4+1w/d6w	L1/0
Claws (x2/x4)	14/7/3	d4w/d4+2w/2d4w	L1/0
Wing slash	14/7/3	d6-1s/d4w/2d4-1w	L1/0

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks!
 Armor: d6 (L1), d4+1 (H1), none (En)

¹ The collective telekinetic energy of a mhwada pack generates a telekinetic field around each member when within a 5-meter proximity to two or more mhwadas and in flight. A side effect of the telekinetic field that enhances their natural gliding grants a low-level shield that hedges ranged weapons aimed at them while in flight, raising this +2 modifier to a +3 modifier when the field is activated.

Skills

Athletics [11]-climb [15], jump [14], Unarmed [11]-brawl [14], Acrobatics [15]-fall [15], flight [16], Stealth [13]-shadow [17], Stamina [10]-resist pain [15], Awareness [11]-intuition [13], perception [16], investigate [11]-search [15], track [16], Reason [11]-physical [14], Telekinetic [12]-location¹ [15].

¹ Telekinetic location is only usable in a pack of five or more mhwadas.

Mhwada Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series 1

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Biome: All temperate aerial and land

Encounter Chance: Probable

Group Size: 11-36 (5d6+6)

Organization: Pack

Niche: Small omnivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

OHMEL

Ohmel's highly elliptical orbit and the age of Coulomb have both contributed to Ohmel's ice age. In spite of long periods of frigid cold punctuated by too-brief warmer stints, the incredibly resilient biosphere of Ohmel has produced some very adaptable creatures. While the planet may have once had an abundance of species, its current state as an icebound planet for more than 80% of its year has reduced its biodiversity to a few hundred species of flora and fauna. If you have seen Ohmel's winter, the incredible changes in the plants and animals that occur in its short summer seem almost miraculous. —AV, CSS

Ohmel

Parent: Coulomb, M1
Orbital Radius: 0.4–2.9 AU
Orbital Period: 1,209.7 days
Rotation Period: 31.3 hours
Axial Tilt: Moderate (14.2°)
Diameter: 11,847 km
Density (Earth=1): 1.69

Surface Gravity: 0.78 g
Atmosphere: N₂, O₂
Pressure: 0.5 atm
Median Temperature: -878° C
Satellites: One
GRAPE: G1/R2/A2/P1/H1

The notoriously remote Coulomb system offers little of interest other than these two facts: It houses the last shred of the long-fallen Loodal States of Old Space, and it holds Glassmaker ruins. An M1 class red dwarf star, Coulomb ranks among the most remote Concord holdings after GW2. First explored in 2332 and colonized by 2337, Coulomb's fate has been inextricably linked to the Nyngwe family and its influential trade consortium. A barren system consisting of a solitary planet, Coulomb hardly lent itself to colonization and settlement. One Loodal noble, Lord Karin Nyngwe, persisted nevertheless in claiming the system and colonizing the planet at his own expense to gain ownership of it. He persuaded colonists to travel here as a chance for a fresh start in the wake of an economically devastating war.

After many years, the Nyngwe aristocracy now owns Ohmel lock, stock, and barrel, though its citizens with otherwise and have increasingly restless since, as a colony of the Loodal States, Ohmel was "donated" to Concord Prime after GW2. The Nyngwe family mines on Ohmel's moon finally have produced some small profits, though funding Austria mercenaries to resist the rabble and fend off Concord attempts at bringing Coulomb and Ohmel into the Concordian fold saps most of their revenues. During the civil disturbances of the past two years, no fewer than three habitat domes over outlying towns have been shattered, and those settlements are now ghost towns. The Concord would prefer a diplomatic solution, but the armed suppression of Ohmel's people by its leaders and their Austria mercenaries—aid continued violations of Concord civil rights—may force a military solution sometime in early 2504. In addition to the colonial rights situation, Lady Klira Nyngwe's continued alliance with Austria-Danis and new alliances with the Thaidens have Concord officials concerned. While the Nyngwes believe the concern comes from loss of trade revenues, the Concord's recent discovery of the maduro and their Caribbean colony makes this system among the closest positions from which they can try to learn more about their newfound allies.

Ecologically, Ohmel is a dying world. Its star will glimmer and go dark in only a million years or so. Ohmel's highly elliptical orbit not only causes its predominant ice age, but many theories that the odd forms of life on Ohmel have developed due to their increased radiation exposure during the planet's short but close passages to the star. Of course, this theory ignores that radiation levels during the 166 galactic years of Loodal surveys rarely rise beyond 50 rads in a year, even at the closest orbit to Coulomb. The redshift and red-radiant biosphere cannot be explained by the ozone layer common to many worlds or the frozen and thaw of water elements of the atmosphere. A leading theory hatched in 2501 involves one of the more intense recently discovered ruins whose surfaces is intermittently visible as it glows through its glacial prison.

Ohmel, a planet with a Class 2 environment, spends more than 80% of its stellar orbit in a recurrent ice age. Even during the 214 days where Ohmel orbits within 1 AU of Coulomb, only 106 days are warm enough for people in ventures beyond the habitat domes of the planet's colonies without s-suits. The high mountains and the narrow but deep valleys remain blocked by glaciers much of the year, but melting and some peripheral recession of the great ice sheets occur during a short spring. This opens up about 45% of the planet's surface and reveals the rough tundra that becomes as full of life as a jungle during the summer (or the Thaw, as locals call it).

During the Thaw, incredible changes occur on the surface. Floods from thawing glaciers and ice packs bring nutrients and water to the lowlands, creating temporary lakes and ponds in pockets all across the planet. As the colony sweetly located its domes on the solid backdrop of the highlands and mountain foothills, these raging torrents of water rarely do more than provide settlers with spectacles to watch. Since most species of animals (and plants, to some extent) on Ohmel hibernates, the first 40 days of the Thaw see both dramatic rises in air temperature and animal and plant activity. Small trees and plants grow at tremendous rates, and calimists often get two or three harvests of their greenhouse hybrids.

Chanar

If seen just before hibernation, folk are hard-pressed to believe that the bloated, slow-moving chanar could ever be a threat. Those who have seen a ravenous chanar hunting during the early Thaw are quick to correct them. These hunters are hardly fast or particularly well adapted to Ohmel's terrain, but their innate cleverness keeps them among the most prolific of predator species here. —AV, CSS

Chanars rumble down from their highland cave dens to feed and prey on nearly anything available within all of Ohmel's biomes. Omnivorous to the extreme, chanars consume everything from berries and roots to throsses, rhelars, and shaskan fish to carrion. They show little fear of the human settlers, who learned quickly from experience that slither weapons only enrage chanars rather than stunned them. Over the existence of the colony, an average of 25 people have their lives cut short by chanar attacks each Thaw.

Description: Chanars are ursines of astonishing size and adaptability. They range in size from half-meter-long cubs born just before the Thaw to adults that are 4 meters in length and weigh 900



Chanar Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 2

GRAPH: G1/R2/A2/P1/H1

Homes: Any arctic land

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 1–4 (d4)

Organization: Solitary or family unit

Niche: Omnivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

Chanar Game Data

STR 17 (d4+14) **JNT** 4 (Animal 14 or d4+11)

DEX 12 (d4+9) **WIL** 14 (d6+10)

CON 15 (2d4+10) **PER** 4 (Animal 15 or 2d4+9)

Durability: 15/15/7/7 **Action check:** 12+/11/5/2

Move: sprint 50, run 36, walk 10 **#Actions:** 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Bite 18/8/4 d6s/d4+1w/d6+1w **L/O**

Claws (x2) 18/8/4 d4+1w/d4w/d4+1w **L/O**

Crushing roll 18/8/4 d6s/d4+1w/d6+1w **L/O**

Defenses

+3 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: d6+1 (L), d4+1 (H), d6 (E)

Skills

Athletics [17], **Unarmed** [17]—**brawl** [18], **Stealth** [12]—**hide** [15], **shadow** [15], **Stamina** [15]—**endurance** [18], **Awareness** [14]—**intuition** [17], **Investigate** [14]—**search** [16], **track** [19], **Resolve** [14]—**physical** [16].

kilograms. Their thick fur coats change during the seasons. Dirty white winter fur is shed as they emerge from hibernation to be replaced by a lighter dark brown fur during the Thaw, and this in turn thickens and lightens to white as its many undercoats grow in and Ohmel returns to its long winter. Chanars also have a rough row of dark brown to gray hornlike plates along their spines. Their coloration makes hunting chanars look like snow-dappled slopes while waiting for their prey.

Encounter: Chanars are patient hunters. They establish a hunting territory and wait in one spot for 15 hours or more for prey to forget their presence. Chanars hiding behind sun-drenched rocks are difficult to see without scanning all immediate terrain from a number of angles. They appear to be part of a ridge and then suddenly lunge out at hapless hikers collecting blue talis flowers growing near the rocks.

Preferring to attack from above and leap downward, chanars pursue prey tirelessly until they suffer damage equal to more than half their durability in wound points. Given their size and relative speed, their hunting tactics revolve around inducing fear and wearing prey down in pursuit. The strangest attack chanars use against clawed or extremely aggressive foes is to roll over onto them. This tactic allows them to use their spinal ridges to protect themselves while crushing their attackers.

Habitat Society Chanars are solitary creatures that vigorously protect their territory. Given their size and dietary needs, finding more than one on a single locale increases the danger in the vicinity, since usually only a mother and cubs or two chanars battling over territory are what cause the situation to occur. The roars of battling chanars echoing among the deep glacial valleys and the highlands are sure signs of the Thaw's arrival.

Unlike Terran grizzlies, chanars mate just after the end of the Thaw and before falling into hibernation. Cubs are born after gestating for 900 days. They remain in the den and emerge from it along with their mother and father at the first signs of the Thaw. Chanar families remain together for half of Ohmal's summer, then fragment off to find their own hunting territories and new mates. Chanars have

one or two cubs per litter and their mothers teach them to hunt and fish.

Some natives of outlying dome towns swear that chanars are smart enough to become real enemies. They say particular chanars stalk prey over years or decades, waiting for their nemesis to slip up before attacking. The most famous example cited of this legend is the case of Robert Sarban of Tungusta and Cyclops, a one-eyed, scarred chanar that lairs somewhere in the highlands above the Tungusta dome. Cyclops killed Robert's daughter in 2489 and his wife in 2492. In return, Sarban and his hunting parties have killed more than seven cubs during the same years. Now, Sarban is nearly mad and spends much of the Thaw each year wandering the highlands seeking vengeance on the black-spined chanar.



If any species of Verge-born creature was more apt to be adopted and moved offworld by explorers looking for pets than the dhros, it has yet to be discovered. These docile yet clever creatures have gained the nickname of "Ohmonkeys" among the settlers here, and the Ngongwe-owned Akeltrow Suppliers has shipped thousands of these creatures off to various medical concerns as well as private owners. We and others of the CSS have logged complaints about the exportation of a sentient species beyond its normal biomes, but the practice continues. I pray that the dhros become a contribution to any place they are introduced rather than a detriment.—AV, CSS

Called "Ohmonkeys" by the colonists, these small creatures lope along on four legs at incredible speeds and use their prehensile tails as a fifth leg or limb to propel themselves through the upper branches of the plant life on Ohmal. Herbivorous and with behavior more akin to squirrels and other tree-dwelling rodents than monkeys, dhroses enhance their biome on Ohmal by rooting for food using the extended claws at their elbows. This rooting behavior

loosens up frozen ground and allows for easier plant growth. Though most colonists find them endearingly cute, some colonies have nevertheless grown to hate dhroses because they despoil hydroponics gardens. Regardless of precautions that may have been taken, dhroses often find ways to circumvent basic defenses and get to any fruits, roots, or other edible plants they can smell.

Description. Dhroses are small, compact little creatures with the short forelimbs and enlarged hind legs common to rodents. Adults weigh about 20 kilograms, and they never exceed 80 centimeters in

Dhros Game Data

STR 8 (2d4+3) INT 4 (Animal 12 or 2d4+7)
DEX 12 (d8+7) WIL 12 (d4+9)
CON 8 (2d4+3) FER 4 (Animal 12 or 2d6+5)
Durability: 11/0/4 Action check: 14+/13/8/3
Move: sprint 40, run 24, walk 8, jump 18 #Actions: 3
Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

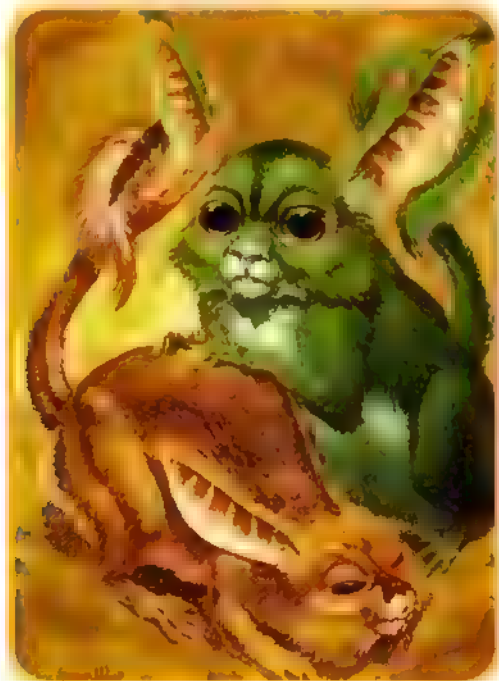
Bite 11/0/2 d4-1w/d4/d6s L1/0
Elbow claws (x2) 10/5/2 d4+2w/d4-1w/d4+1w L1/0

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d4-1 (L1), none (H1), d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics (8)—climb [12], jump [14], throw [11], Unarmed (8)—brawl [10], Acrobatics [12], fall [16], Stealth [12], sneak [14], Awareness [12], intuition [15], Investigate [12], search [13],



Dhros Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 2
GRAPH: G1/R2/A2/P1/H1
Habits: Any land
Encounter Chance: Probable
Group Size: 3-24 (3d8)
Organization: Family group or pack
Niche: Omnivore
Intelligence: High-order animal

length, including the tails that account for over one-third their body lengths. Their tails are prehensile, and all their limbs end in paws with opposable thumbs. This grants them a great deal of dexterity for the purpose of object manipulation. Their heads have flat, wide noses more akin to primates, and wide cuplike ears with scalloped earflaps that are best described as badlike rabbit ears. Dhroses have no set pigmentation or hair coloring. Their coats shift gradually in color from pure white to jet-black and nearly any color in between. This camouflage ability seems to parallel the weren's, but it is not instantaneous nor as complete. Dhroses simply take on the most predominant color of their habitat, whether this is the grayish brown of bare mountain slopes, the deep green of the agave forests, or the bright purple of a child's room in the Miansk dome town. Their fur takes about a month to match a new environment. While adjusting it is a mix of the old and new colors. Regardless of a dhros's coat color, its expressive and inquisitive eyes forever remain huge jet-black pupils with barely any iris.

Encounter: Dhroses are docile, timid creatures. Their typical response to encounters is to flee to the highest spot they can find, screaming and screaming all the way. Only when trapped with

nowhere to flee do dhroses attack, using first their bite and then flailing wildly to connect with their elbow claws until they gain a chance to escape. Female dhroses are the more aggressive of the species. Female dhroses have been observed on occasion attacking adult chanars to protect their young by purposefully sinking their claws into the bearlike beasts' faces and necks to drive them away. The only other time dhroses attack is if their winter food stores are invaded.

Dhroses adopted into a colony become partly domesticated, and their behavior patterns shift slightly. Those adopted from birth view their human owners as parents, protectors and attempt to imitate anything done by humans. Inquisitive and determined to get into anything that smells of food, dhroses can cause small hurricanes of destruction within habitat domes by cracking containment shields with their elbow claws. Abandoned or escaped dhroses follow instinctual patterns and seek out the highest points in a region, often wiring in air filtration vents and support structures at the tops of the colony domes.

Habitat Society: Dhroses are relatively advanced rodents and sometimes seem to show signs of intelligence. Still, clever for a rodent hardly constitutes sentience. While they can learn simple tricks, dhroses cleverness usually only applies to how many ways can they avoid being attacked or eaten by other creatures. They are also among the few creatures on Ohmel that store food in lairs with them over the winter rather than accumulate it as excess body fat. Dhroses winter lairs often are small caves or burrows along the lower hill-sides of Ohmel. These are often shared by up to a dozen dhroses at a time—usually two mated pairs of dhroses and their offspring.

Dhroses readily share the treetops and hillsides with numerous other creatures, though they become territorial about their food stores as those become about half filled with food for the winter. During the mating season about 100 days into the Thaw, male dhroses become adversarial and aggressive to other male dhroses and to all other species until the females have chosen their mates.

Rhelaur

Colloquially known as the snow strider due to Jack Everstar's popular 2502 no-*void* *icedeadth*, the Ohmelan rhelaur garners the most offworld attention of any of Ohmel's species. Rhelaurs are relatively docile herbivorous marsupials found anywhere in Ohmel except on the high ice of the glaciers. While Jack Everstar apparently made a mount of one, they are often quite stubborn even if trained and rarely accept riders heavier than their own children or 100 kilograms in weight. Rhelaurs supply important living resources to the

cold-bound colonies on Ohmel, from their long-haired coats to their flesh. Their meat is edible when properly treated and is a food staple among the outlying colony domes.

Long in the torso and hexapedal, rhelaurs either cling to the precarious mountain slopes using their six limbs or they dash along on their powerful hind legs alone when on level ground. Their primary threats for survival are the chanars, but they compete for many of the kinds of food as the dhroses. Rhelaurs stand out from the other species on Ohmel simply through their tenacity: they remain active for all but a brief 160-day hibernation period at the height of Ohmel's winter.

Rhelaur Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 2
GRAPH: G1/R2/A2/P1/H1
Habits: Any arctic or temperate land
Encounter Chance: Probable
Group Size: 5-40 (5d8)
Organization: Herd
Niche: Herbivore
Intelligence: High-order animal

Description: Rhelaurs are six-limbed marsupials that stand about 3 meters high when reared up on their hind legs. Their vestigial, wide, flat tails add no discernable body length. The rhelaur's limbs are spread along its long torso. Its rear legs are set wide and have flat, clawed feet for moving on snow. The two pairs of forelimbs provide five-fingered paws with retractable claws. All rhelaurs share the long, matted, woollike hair that protects them from all but the worst of the bitter winter temperature. Its coloration runs from ash gray to white, ignoring its general lack of cleanliness. Their heads are angular.



Rhelaurs Game Data

STR 16 (d4+13) INT 3 (Animal 2 or d4+5)
DEX 11 (d6+7) WIL 8 (d6+4)
CON 14 (2d4+9) PER 4 (Animal 12 or d6+8)
Durability: 14/14/7/7 Action check: 12+/11/5/2
Moves: sprint 56, run 36, walk 12, (jump 8) #Actions: 2
Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Attack

Claws (x4) 17/8/4 d4+1s/d4w/d4+1w L/U
Kick/trample 17/8/4 d12s/d4+2w/2d4w L/U

Defenses

+3 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d4 (L), d4-2 (H), d4-1 (En)

Skills

Athletics [15]-jump [20], Unarmed [16]-brawl [17], Acrobatics [11]-dodge [14], fall [12], Movement [14]-trailblazing [15], Stamina [14]-endurance [16], Awareness [8]-intuition [12], Resolve [8]-physical [10]

though their ears are large and low, spreading behind the jaw. Their ears are covered by a cupped shell that improves their hearing. Typical rhelaurs weigh between 300 and 500 kilograms. Though they are well hidden beneath their long-haired coats, rhelaurs have external pouches on their abdomens in which their young develop.

Encounter. What rhelaurs do when encountered depends entirely on where and in what circumstances the encounter takes place. Their predominant response is flight, which they pursue with speeds rarely matched by the creatures hunting them. They travel in herds, like many herbivores, both for safety and for warmth as they huddle together to feed on patches of gargass, Phadak's thistle, and vurl shrubs. When they come under attack, their snorts and nickers set the herd into flight.

Rhelaurs, though commonly quiet and docile creatures, become aggressive when trapped or carrying their young. When they are left with nowhere to flee, the most common attacks they deliver come from one to four of their claws, from a powerful kick, or from an attempt to trample a foe with their hind legs. Their bites are negligible in terms of damage unless one gamely puts something fully into their jaws.

Habitat Society Rhelaurs have an instinctive herding instinct that aids them in staying warm and safe in this harsh environment. Comparable to both wild horses and deer of Old Earth, rhelaurs are the hardiest and most numerous species to walk on two or more legs on Ohmal. They startle easily and bolt at the first sign of nonrhelaurs, though only extremely fine hearing and a keen sense of smell offset their reliance on movement to see any potential predators. Thus, chanaurs' patient lying-in-wait hunting strategies provide them with many opportunities to prey on rhelaurs.

Male rhelaurs aggressively defend the females of the herd, keep them to the inside of the herd to protect them and any pups they have. Males are constantly guided to the outside of the group. During mating season and during the early Thaw while the females are burdened with up to two pups, male rhelaurs charge at potential enemies ranging from other males to predators. Born relatively undeveloped, rhelaurs pups crawl into their mother's pouch just before the start of the hibernation season and grow over the course of the winter. They leave their mothers at the height of the Thaw when they are fully grown.

Domesticated Rhelaurs

From the earliest days of the settlement of Ohmal, humans have captured and domesticated rhelaurs to act as both beasts of burden and to serve as simple resources. Rhelaurs sometimes act as a colony's grain supplier, but what they give back makes the cost negligible to most settlers.

Colonists use males as mules, taking them out on runs across the snowfields and glaciers in all but the darkest winter, when contact breaks down between neighboring domes. Rhelaurs have been domesticated to accept riders or weights of up to 150 kilograms on their backs, but they are only willing to work with one or two riders. They identify their riders by scent. Some see this behavior as loyalty to their riders or owners. Others disagree. Jack Everstar learned the hard way that you don't get astride a rhelaurs without cupping its nose with your hand so that it can scent you.

Long-haired rhelaurs fur also provides a great export for the Columbian settlers. While rhelaurs naturally shed their heaviest coats during the Thaw, domesticated rhelaurs are sheared twice during the winter and once during the Thaw, since the internal heating of the colonies negates their need for their heavy coats. The domes each have individual methods for dyeing and weaving rhelaurs wool into decoratively patterned yarn and cloth, from which they make sweaters and blankets. More than 50% of the weavers' goods remain in use on Coulomb, but the luxurious exported rhelaurs wool provides great warmth without any discomfort for these uncomfortable in synthetics.

Rhelaurs also act as cattle for some domes, though not all the settlers or offworlders have developed a taste for the stringy meat. Last but not least, rhelaurs droppings aid in fertilizing the hydroponics bays and greenhouses within all the colonies. In all, rhelaurs' contributions to the well-being of the colonies make it worth the effort and expense to domesticate these animals.



CAUSEWAY

Causeway has been settled four times. The first colony suffered a catastrophic fire in its food storage structures. The next lasted until its generator failed. The last two attempts consisted of the same group trying to colonize separate locales on separate occasions—both times without achieving promising results. A lack of arable land, sustainable water supplies, and edible local vegetation make Causeway's only redeeming feature its tolerable atmosphere.

The existence of the species catalogued here—the crow eagle, the rock mantis, and the dancing spider—was reported by various expeditions and colonization efforts, but extensive data has never been collected. Those who got close enough to these life-forms generally didn't survive the experience. In any event, the indigenous species remained minor mysteries.

Since the Galactic Concord's return to the Verge, Causeway has gone largely ignored. A lack of exploitable resources make it uninteresting except to vacationing Concordians seeking an out-of-the-way locale in which to rough it for a few weeks. Even these vacationers do not visit the planet more than once every year or so.

But now with a potential war with the Externals looming, Causeway becomes an important planet. Supply ships passing between Chester and Arcturus, McCormick's Star, or Argis can certainly benefit by stopping at a planet with a breathable atmosphere. More importantly, if the Externals attempt a push through the Chester system, Crow could be a pivotal battlefield. Whoever controls Causeway controls a major approach to Argis.

If the ships we saw entering the Crow system as we departed are any indication, the Galactic Concord has not failed to notice this fact.—*BE, CLA*

Causeway is slightly smaller than Earth, with a lower gravity, a colder average temperature, and a thinner atmosphere. Some of the ecotourists who enjoy the environment liken it to Earth's Rocky Mountain range. The weather

does not change radically, though the temperature drops low enough at night that survival gear is mandatory. The temperature variation is somewhat more bearable in summer than winter, but not by much—Causeway's axial tilt is smaller than Earth's.

Causeway is a world of little water. While it has a smattering of lakes in the temperate zones, rivers crisscrossing most of the planet's surface, and polar ice caps, none of these are very deep. Lake Rich, which is located near where the *Kepler* team made base camp, is the deepest, and it is only about 20 meters deep. The water of Causeway requires careful purification procedures before it is potable by human beings.

Very little soil covers Causeway. Whatever the terrain, just under the surface lurks several meters of solid rock. With little natural erosion, the planet seems resistant to softening up. Only the hardiest of plants take root and thrive.

The most common of these plants is a mossy fungus that grows in spongelike clumps in the rocky crevices of the planet's hilly regions. Running a close second is a type of durable grass that appears wherever soil collects, regardless of the climate. Expeditions found the grass in mountain crevasses, surrounding waterways, and scattered across the vast scrublands of Causeway's temperate zone. Neither of these plants is particularly nourishing to mammals, though both are marginally edible. The grass is a primary source of necessary nutrients for the rock mantis, and the crumbly fungus feeds the planet's smaller insects.

Only a small section of Causeway, a subarctic belt no more than 5 kilometers across and about 300 kilometers long, is forested. The trees of Causeway, at 3 meters high, are little more than particularly tall bushes. (Oddly, they are surprisingly tasty to the [see palate.] This region is home to a large number of small, furry marsupials that were dubbed bush cats by the earliest settlers. The bush cats are both voracious pests, but they very rarely venture outside their forest.

Biomes of Causeway include forest, temperate scrublands and steppes, hills, several large mountain ranges, a few water areas, and vast rocky deserts on the equator. Animals on Causeway are primarily insects and small marsupials, though a few avians and larger mammals dwell in isolated areas.

Causeway

Parent: Crow KE

Orbital Radius: 1.19 AU

Orbital Period: 586.7 days

Rotation Period: 19.61 hours

Axial Tilt: Moderate (14.7°)

Diameter: 12,244 km

Gravity (Earth=1): 1.14

Surface Gravity: 1.04 g

Atmosphere: N₂, O₂

Pressure: 0.87 atm

Median Temperature: -5.3 C

Satellites: Two

GRAPE: G1/R1/AS/P2/H2



Crow Eagle

Administrator Grant named the crow eagle not only for its coloration and size, but also for the system in which it was discovered. Avians of amazing size, crow eagles hunt the rocky grasslands that dot the temperate zones of Causeway's eastern hemisphere. The survey team found them aggressive in the extreme, and though there were no deaths, the teams decided to assign at least one member to watch the skies as a precaution.

Crow eagles are strictly carnivores, preying almost entirely on the small mammals that forage among the grasses within a 20-kilometer range of their aeries. They supplement their diets with the larger arthropods that make their homes among the grasslands. The crow eagles only hunt them at twilight, when the cold makes the insects slower. In full daylight, the insects usually prove too quick for even the lightning-fast flyers.



Description: The crow eagle is a large avian comparable in size to the golden eagle or condor. It is dark gray in color with a bluish gray underbelly that makes it difficult to detect from below. At night or even at dusk, it is nearly impossible to pick out against the night sky without the aid of scanning devices. It possesses powerful, clawed feet with talons up to 8 centimeters long and a beak adapted for both preying on and eating insects. Females exhibit a less developed beak structure. Standing up to 1 meter tall and with a wingspan of up to 5 meters, the crow eagle is the largest avian on Causeway. It weighs an average of 40 kilograms.

Encounter: As with most birds of prey, the crow eagle displays no interest in targets larger than itself. It spends its daylight hours gliding effortlessly over its territory and occasionally swooping in with a blood-chilling shriek to make a meal of a hapless herbivore caught too long out in the open. It has been known to attack sea and land as well. When sufficiently hungry, the crow eagle attacks even creatures at the edges of a pack, carrying the stragglers off before the rest gather their wits.

The crow eagle uses its coloration to glide unnoticed above potential prey while waiting for the opportunity to make a diving at-

tack. It spreads its powerful wings only at the last minute, which lends it the appearance of a bullet that suddenly explodes into a shroud of claws and feathers. This attack is so quiet and sudden that its intended victim suffers a +2 step penalty to Awareness: *Intuition* or *Awareness-perception* checks.

Simultaneous with its braking maneuver, the crow eagle emits a piercing shriek designed to temporarily disorient its target until the avian has it firmly grasped. The victim is allowed a *Resolve-mental* check before the crow eagle's attack. On an Amazing success, the crow eagle suffers a +1 step penalty to its attack. On a Failure, the modifier is a -1 step bonus, and on a Critical Failure, the modifier is a -2 step bonus. On an Ordinary or Good success, there is no modifier.

Whether the attack is successful or not, the crow eagle immediately returns to the sky. If the attack failed, the crow eagle usually seeks prey elsewhere—especially if it was wounded in the process. Only when defending its nest does it remain and fight. More often, though, the helpless prey animal is carried off to the nest or to rocky crags where it must attempt to defend itself from the creature's beak and talons.

Habitat Society: The talons of the crow eagle make it an exceptional climber. Crow eagle aeries are often found in rocky openings beneath overhangs, where they are sheltered from the elements.

The crow eagle mates for life. When one of them dies, the survivor seeks a new mate. This pairing is the largest collection of adult

Crow Eagle Game Data

STR 9	(d4+6)	INT 3	(Animal 8 or d6+4)
DEX 14	(d6+10)	WIL 12	(d8+6)
CON 7	(d6+3)	PER 2	(Animal 6 or d4+4)
Durability: 7/7/4		Action check: 14+/13/6/3	
Move: walk 8, glide 70, fly 80		#Actions: 2	
Reaction score: Ordinary/2			

Attacks

Talons	13/6/3	d4+1s/d4+1w/d4+2w	LJ/O
Beak	12/6/3	d4s/d4+1s/d4+1w	LJ/O

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor: d4-1 (LJ), none (HL), d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [9]-*climb* [12], Unarmed [9]-*brawl* [13], Acrobatics [14]-*flight* [17], Stealth [14], Stamina [7]-*endurance* [11], Awareness [12]-*intuition* [14], *perception* [18], *Resolve* [12]-*physical* [14].

Crow Eagle Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series 1
Environment: Class 2
GRAPH: G1/R1/A3/P2/H2
Biome: Temperate arid mountains and steppes
Encounter Chance: Possible
Group Size: 1-2 (d4+2)
Organization: Mated pairs
Niche: Carnivore (predator)
Intelligence: High-order animal

crow eagles that is found in one place. They are far too territorial to suffer interlopers for long. The only exception is when two or more males approach the same female as a potential mate, but this situation ends in one male driving off the other.

The young of a crow eagle are tolerated only until they are old enough that they begin attacking each other for nourishment. When

they begin to exhibit this behavior, the mother and father leave the nest alone for several days. If the young are still in the nest when the father returns, he eats them if they don't leave quickly enough. To reinforce his territorial claim, the father also pursues any of his male offspring for as much as a kilometer. The mother generally exhibits the same behavior with the females.

Dancing Spider

Dancing Spider Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 2

GRAPH: G1/R1/A3/P2/H2

Habitat: Temperate arid hills, mountains, and steppes

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 1

Organization: Solitary

Niche: Carnivore

Intelligence: Low-order animal

Despite the depredations of the crow eagle, the great avians are not immune to their own prey. A sparkling example is the wily dancing spider, a form of arachnid that sets traps to capture the large birds, then aures them in with a series of movements that simulate distress to catch the flyer's eyes.

Description. The dancing spider only nominally falls into the category of arachnid. It more closely resembles a crab, except in its ability to spin webs. The dancing spider possesses four pairs of legs, though two pairs are extended away from the body for walking and two of the pairs seem almost vestigial. The entire body and the extended legs are covered in an elaborate pattern of green and gray spines only a centimeter in length. The spines allow the spider to blend effectively into its surroundings until it is ready to be seen. The body of the creature is approximately 35 centimeters long and weighs 10 kilograms. Including the extended legs, it is a full meter long but weighs only 5 to 8 kilograms.

Encounter: A dancing spider hides during the daylight hours, emerging only to feed on creatures trapped in its web. The web is spun completely by night. The web is designed in a pattern meant to take advantage of victims with nonsegmented eyes; it blends effectively with its surroundings (+2 step penalty to Awareness-perception checks to spot). Most commonly, the spider builds the web in open spaces between rocky outcroppings that are wide enough for a crow eagle to fly through. Then in the morning when the web is complete, the dancing spider creeps out to one side of the web and performs a frenzied dance that makes it appear to be helpless.



Dancing Spider Game Data

STR 6 (d4+4) **INT** 2 (Animal 4 or d4+2)
DEX 14 (d6+10) **WIL** 10 (d6+7)
CON 6 (d4+3) **PER** 2 (Animal 4 or d4+2)
Durability: 6/6/3/3 **Action check:** 16+/15/7/3
Move: sprint 30, run 20, walk 8 **#Actions:** 2
Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Bite¹ 12/6/3 d4-1a/d4+1a/d4w **LD** 0
¹ First poison (see text)

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

+3 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: d4-1 (LL), none (H), d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [6]-climb [12], **Unarmed** [6]-brawl [12], **Manipulation** [14], **Stealth** [14]-hide [18], **sneak** [16], **Sustenance** [6]-survival [3], **Awareness** [10]-intuition [12].

Eventually, a crow eagle notices the creature's faked distress and attacks—usually becoming entangled in the web.

Any creature that fails an Awareness-perception check and blunders into the web may, once per round, attempt a Strength feat check to tear free, but all physical actions undertaken in the web incur a +1 step penalty. A victim that cannot free itself in 1 round finds itself attacked by the dancing spider. The spider uses its bite to inject a paralytic venom that leaves the victim docile enough to be drained of bodily fluid over the course of the next several days.

This poison has an onset time of 1 minute and inflicts a +4 step penalty to any physical action attempted (in addition to the +1 step penalty for being entangled in the web). The duration of the paralysis depends on the result of the Constitution feat check. With an Amazing success, the penalty lasts only one round. Good success, ten minutes, an Ordinary success, d4 hours, a Failure, 6d4 hours, a Critical Failure, d4 days. Poisoning can be treated with Medical Success-treatment as described in the Hazards section of Chapter 3. Gamemasters in Action in the Gamemaster Guide.



Habitat/Society Dancing spiders hunt and live alone, coming together only to mate. Mating is an event that invariably leaves the male temporarily paralyzed due to the female's venom, and a pass-

ing crow eagle or rock mantis usually devours him. A typical mating produces 4d20 eggs.



The square-cube law is pushed to the limit by the rock mantis, a carapaced arthropod that prowls the rocky grasslands of Causeway. Its ability to achieve and maintain its size seems to be explained by the mantis's low-energy style of hunting. But the protective coloration and texture of its chitin misleads the observer into believing that it is a ponderously heavy insect. On the contrary, we clocked one at just under 50 kilometers per hour —RG, CLA

Description: Like Earth mantids, the rock mantis of Causeway possesses large, prickly forelimbs that it uses to snag and immobilize prey. This arthropod is named for its rough surface texture, which mimics the rocky terrain it favors. This growth is actually rather less solid than it appears, though it is obviously an exoskeleton. Its large, segmented eyes survey the sky for predators even as they search the ground for prey. Its mouth, unlike Earth mantids, is fairly large, but it hinges vertically, and each jaw is independent of the other. The rock mantis averages about 40 centimeters in length and about 5 kilograms in weight.

Encounter: A rock mantis is never encountered alone, even though it may be the only one an observer notes. They hunt by remaining motionless for hours on end, visitors may stroll through entire colonies of them without noting a single one. The rock mantis's *Stealth* hide check determines the modifier to an observer's Perception-awareness or Perception-intuition check. On an Ordinary success, the skill check has a +1 step penalty. Good, a +2 step penalty. Amazing, a +3 step penalty. On a Failure, the modifier is a -1 step bonus, and on a Critical Failure, the modifier is a -2 step bonus.

When the insect population grows out of proportion to the food supply, the rock mantis foregoes stealth. When encountered in numbers, the insects swarm over any creature, despite any losses they suffer in the process. They even occasionally bring down an attacking crow eagle, swarming over it before it returns to the air, and biting relentlessly until the avian plummets from the sky. The rock mantises that survive the fall then feast on the carcass.

The rock mantis's bite is particularly effective due to its habit of regurgitating digestive juices onto its victim before swallowing the now semibroiled bite. For this reason, the mantis's attack is considered to inflict energy damage.

Habitat/Society The rock mantis mates indiscriminately and often, often dooming itself to starvation when the species's population overtakes the environment's capacity to provide food. Though a rock mantis eats plant life, it usually only does so to generate a sufficient quantity of gastrointestinal juices with which to devour animals. When animal prey is in short supply, the rock mantis may eat plant life until it is dissolved by its own digestive system.

Cold weather makes the rock mantis considerably less active. When cold, it does not move unless disturbed. The temperature drop each evening makes the rock mantis particularly vulnerable to other predators, especially the crow eagle. Thus, dusk finds the most fortunate rock mantises carefully burrowed into cracks in the rocks, where they absorb the fading heat until dawn arrives.

The most chilling sound I heard on Causeway was the rustling whisper of dozens of approaching rock mantises. I still shudder when I hear similar sounds, even on other worlds where I know they do not live —AV, CSS

Rock Mantis Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 2

GRAPH: G1/R1/A3/P2/H2

Biome: Temperate acid steppes, scrublands, and hills

Encounter Chance: Possible

Brown Size: 8-20 (4d4+4)

Organization: Colony/swarm

Niche: Omnivore

Intelligence: Low-order animal

Rock Mantis Game Data

STR 5	(d4+2)	INT 1	(Animal 2 or d4)
DEX 14	(d4+12)	WIL 6	(d4+4)
CON 4	(d4+1)	PER 2	(Animal 4 or d4+1)
Durability: 4/4/2/2		Action check: 1G+/15/7/3	#Actions: 2
Moves: sprint 4D, run 2D, walk 1D			
Reaction score: Ordinary/2			

Attacker:
Hit: 10/5/2 d4+1s/d4w/d4+1w En/0

Defenses:
 no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor: d4+1 (L), d4-1 (M), d4 (En)

Skills:
 Athletics [5]-climb [0], Unarmed [5]-brawl [10], Stealth [14]-hide [15], Stamina [4]-endurance [0], Awareness [6]-intuition [12], Investigate [5],



PRAXITEL

Although my notes on Praxitel include observations on the flora and fauna, the ecosystem, and weather patterns, I want to record my impressions here of the sentient species we discovered there: the Ko-Fam-Att.

The "Players of Fam-Att" are still a primitive people, but they have a highly developed caste system forged over two millennia of bloody ritual battle. That battle is Fam-Att, their game of ascendancy. According to their own recorded history, Fam-Att began as a simple means of dividing property but escalated into a complex struggle for goods, lands, and status. Among the Ko-Fam-Att are philosophers who believe that the concept of Fam-Att reaches far more deeply into the existence of the Ko-Fam-Att than the brutal sports event played out twice yearly on multilevel courts. They claim that it includes the metaphysics of manipulating the lives, loves, and fortunes of one's friends, family, and enemies to ensure that all the best athletes perform to the best of their ability for the glory of the caste.

Some of the Ko-Fam-Att turn their back on this intense social engineering and choose to live apart from the rest of the caste. These individuals are not considered proper Ko-Fam-Att; they are not actually players. Their lives are rugged and filled with misfortune, but their existence enabled us to learn a great deal about Ko-Fam-Att culture since only they were willing to communicate with aliens such as ourselves. In fact, because we were also not players of the game of Fam-Att, we were actually considered part of their caste, and by extension, their species.

Still, this is hardly a useful position from a diplomatic viewpoint: The catenous Ko-Fam-Att are not true members of society and have no official power. They cannot arrange interviews with the decision-makers among the Ko-Fam-Att, or even convey messages to those who could do so.

Our only recourse on Praxitel if we wish to open negotiations with these sentients is to learn to play their brutal game and then survive one of their semiannual matches. As this means playing all nine of the other teams, all of whom have been playing Fam-Att since childhood, the odds of establishing a diplomatic presence seems remote, at this time.—AV, CSE

Though it is a tremendous mistake to classify a world in terms of a specific moon—desert moon, ice planet, or jungle world—Praxitel comes extremely close to defying that logic by having a surface blanketed in forest vegetation. Aside from the polar regions and the seas and other waterways, over half of Praxitel's surface is jungle. The thickest jungles are found on the hills, valleys, and swamps, but even the lakes and savannas are closely ringed with heavy growth. Equatorial deserts and arctic wastes account for only a small percentage of the land, and lightly forested areas are less common than jungle on Praxitel.

The atmosphere encourages plant growth, though it is physically damaging to humans. Additionally, the large insect population of Praxitel facilitates cross-pollination, and a great many species of Praxitel's large trees and huge bushes bear nectar-producing flowers. The most startling of these is the praxie tree, a huge willowlike tree common all across the planet. It bears thick curtains of flower-covered hanging branches. During the summer months, a single sharp tug on any given branch dislodges thousands of insects. The Ko-Fam-Att style many of their official buildings after the distinctive domed shape of the praxie tree, complete with elaborate ornamentation worked to look like flowers.

Praxitel is obviously rich in natural resources—especially wood. But the lakes and seas are rich with precious life, the hills are loaded with precious metals and high-quality gemstones, and numerous places hold major deposits of a coallike mineral. In addition, the Ko-Fam-Att are industrious farmers who have cleared thousands of acres of jungle around their various cities and converted the land to fields of grain plants. Though the grain is not terribly palatable to other species, the Ko-Fam-Att's success at raising it in the midst of the jungles promises that other species of grain brought to the planet might produce similarly abundant yields. The Galactic Concord is considering how to make best use of this discovery.

Praxitel

Parent: Armstrong, K7	Surface Gravity: 1.09 g
Orbital Radius: 0.97 AU	Atmosphere: N ₂ , O ₂
Orbital Period: 417.0 days	Pressure: 8.66 atm
Rotation Period: 27.17 hours	Median Temperature: 18.6° C
Axial Tilt: Moderate (24.5°)	Satellites: Three
Diameter: 13,280 km	GRAFN: 62/R1/A2/P4/H2
Density (Earth=1): 1.18	



Browl

If the Ko-Fam Att of Praxtel can be said to have a natural enemy, it is the browls. Hundreds of Ko-Fam Att are attacked by browls each year, and only a handful survive. The jungles of Praxtel cover over endless hills, cliffs, and ravines. Some of these have never been seen by sentient beings, and the Ko-Fam Att believe that a mythical City of the Browls exists somewhere deep in the jungle. The more superstitious Ko-Fam Att believe that this place is where the wicked Ko-Fam Att are taken when the browls carry them off, with the more innocent being granted a quick death.

The response of the Ko-Fam Att to all these attacks is an organized browl hunt held several times yearly, open only to members of the current ruling class. Members of the lower classes drive a browl out into the open, where the hunters rush forth to slay the beast with long spears. Though this practice may someday make the browl extinct, for now, browls rule the wildernesses of Praxtel.

Description The browl is built for stalking prey in the wilds. Its body is long and supple, its legs powerful, its head little more than a toothy maw at the end of a thick, muscled neck. The browl's feet are heavily padded, but end in wickedly sharp retractable claws. Its body is covered in short, soft fur in a red-and-brown splatter pattern, likened to dried blood splashed with fresh blood. The creature is approximately 3 meters long and weighs slightly over 400 kilograms.

Encounter Though not a solitary creature, the browl hunts alone, almost always dragging its victim away to feed its mate and young. Browls generally only hunt together when the female is pregnant.

A browl lurks by heavily traveled areas (water holes, cultivated fields, roads, and such) waiting for a likely target to pass—a likely target being someone or something not paying particular attention to its surroundings. When the browl has selected its prey, the beast begins to follow, taking advantage of the terrain and its camouflage to remain just out of the prey's field of vision.

The slow stalking continues until the prey relaxes its guard, better prey presents itself, or the browl becomes too hungry to wait any longer (d4 hours). In the latter case, the browl attacks immediately springing down from cover or suddenly bounding across an open space to land a blow with its jaws before the prey can escape.

If the bite attack results in a Good or Amazing success, the browl has caught the victim in its mouth and sprints away until it is sure it is not being pursued (d4+1 rounds after it is last attacked, in most cases). Should it be forced by constant pursuit to sprint for more than 10 rounds while carrying prey, it turns and fights (if the prey is not moving) or drops the prey and runs (if the prey is still fighting). Once it begins fighting, though, it fights to the death, preferring not to lead such mighty hunters back to its mate and young.



Browl Game Data

STR 17 (d4+14) INT 3 (Animal 7 or d4+5)
 DEX 11 (d4+8) WIL 5 (d6+4)
 CON 17 (d4+14) FER 2 (Animal 6 or d4+4)
 Durability: 17/17/8/8 Action check: 13+/12/6/3
 Move: sprint 40, run 28, walk 8 #Actions: 3
 Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Bite 18/9/4 d4+4w/d4+4w/d5+4w L1/0
 Claw (x2) 20/10/5 2d4w/2d4+4w/2d4w L1/0

Defenses

+4 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor: d6+1 (L1), d6 (H1), d6+1 (En)

Skills

Athletics [18]-climb [21], jump [22], Unarmed [17]-brawl [18]; Stamina [20]-endurance [22]; Stealth [6]-shadow [12]; Awareness [8]-intuition [12], perception [12], Resolve [8]-physical [14].

Habitat Society While the crew of the *Kepler* could not determine if a huge settlement of the carnivorous browl was hidden in the

Browl Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series 1

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P4/H2

Home: All jungle

Encounter Chance: Slim

Group Size: 1-2 (d4+2)

Organization: Mated pairs and their young

Niche: Predatory carnivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

deepest part of the jungle, they did learn that browls are not so numerous as the Ko-Fam Att believe. Their birth rate is considerably lower than the attrition rate they are suffering at the hands of the Ko-Fam Att ruling classes. If the Ko-Fam Att range further afield in search of browl to hunt—which seems probable, as hunting browl is a privilege that comes and goes with the position of the ruling caste—they will decimate the browl within another fifty years and wipe them out altogether ten years after that.

The browl are a deadly species. They are also proud, noble beasts that are gentle with their offspring, tender with their mates, and fierce with their enemies. If a browl has been killed, its mate looks for it until it starves to death and sometimes even leaves its young to fend for themselves in order to pursue the search. Browls mate for life.



The Ko-Fam Att will fail to survive the arrival of visitors from the stars. The species will continue to exist, barring a catastrophe of unparalleled proportions. But the culture will vanish. The Ko-Fam Att have developed their civilization under the assumption that theirs is the only sentient species in existence.

When starfaring species come to Praxitel, their superior technology and numbers will force the Ko-Fam Att to reconsider. For that reason, it is imperative that the Galactic Concord makes that initial contact so that it can ease the culture shock until the Ko-Fam Att are ready to find their place in a galactic community.

The Externals must not reach them first, or the place of the Ko-Fam Att will be that of slaves.—**RE, CLA**

We were fortunate on Praxitel, in that we discovered an enclave of the casteless Ko-Fam Att who were amenable to our overtures. Through them, we gained a working knowledge of Ko-Fam Att culture and an understanding of the sport of Fam Att. Sadly, due to their own social position, they could not speak to the Ko-Fam Att proper on our behalf.—**AV, C95**

The Ko-Fam Att are a people who have no concept of "aliens." Indeed, their language identifies living beings as either Ko-Fam Att or not. But they have not yet explored enough of their world to convince themselves they have seen every kind of animal. Nor do they have the scientific understanding necessary to accept the existence of other worlds, let alone beings from those worlds.

Two characteristics define the Ko-Fam Att. The first is their elaborate rotating caste system, which determines where a given Ko-

Fam Att lives, what it eats, and to whom it may speak. The second characteristic is Fam Att, the brutal and bloody sporting event that the Ko-Fam Att use to determine caste adjustments. It is so integral to their society that the name "Ko-Fam Att" literally means "players of the game."

The caste system is the hurdle that makes communication with the Ko-Fam Att such a difficult proposition. All but a few of the Ko-Fam Att refuse to acknowledge the existence of those who do not play the game, let alone speak with them. Those few castes that do speak with aliens are themselves not considered true Ko-Fam Att. As a result, first encounter teams sent to Praxitel are stymied by their inability to communicate with anyone with decision-making authority. The Ko-Fam Att, while amused by the notion of talking animals, refuse to allow them to play the game. Diplomats sent to Praxitel have reached an impasse.

Description: A male Ko-Fam Att stands just over 2 meters in height and weighs around 120 kilograms, and a female is slightly taller and lighter. The male is stocky, where the female is slender. Both bear broad, flat faces, decorated in intricate, vivid makeup that announces both their caste and their position within their family.

Ko-Fam Att are largely hairless except for leathery strands on their shirts and forearms. The males also possess similar strands on their foreheads as eyebrows, though the females apparently assiduously remove their own. The remainder of a Ko-Fam Att's head is a bony mass resembling a sort of helmet, though it hardly serves as such. Wealthy Ko-Fam Att go to extreme measures to disguise or otherwise cover the bony portions of their heads.





The limbs of a Ko-Fam-Att are almost exaggeratedly long, giving the torso the appearance of being far too small for the rest of the body. The fingers and toes are also separated considerably closer to the wrist and ankle than a human's, lending an almost spiderlike aspect to the way a Ko-Fam-Att walks and gestures.

Encounter: The Ko-Fam-Att have a healthy respect for the dangers of Praxite's jungles. Their expeditions outside their cities are always conducted in large numbers. The minimum size of such a group is dependent on the group's current position in the caste system, but the bare minimum is no fewer than three Ko-Fam-Att.

The upper size of the party is determined by their purpose. The organized (browl) hunts of the ascendant class include more than two hundred Ko-Fam-Att and a wide variety of castes. A merchant caravan traveling between cities consists of hundreds of laborers and a handful of merchants. A group of farmers or wood-gatherers might consist of only about twenty or thirty individuals.

In any case, each group includes a few warriors to guard the

rest. Because these warriors are often members of the Fam-Att teams, their services do not come cheaply, and they are unavailable altogether twice a year, when they are needed to play in the Fam-Att games. At these times, they are the ones being guarded—by cheering, exultant crowds of their caste—as they journey from city to city to play for caste status.

Habitat Society: Ko-Fam-Att civilization is in the early stages of development. The Ko-Fam-Att build cities where traders congregate, which generally means alongside rivers. (Before the survey team's first encounter with them, the Ko-Fam-Att were known simply as "the river people.") Their cities are complicated affairs of wood and stone, with winding streets and large market plazas built right on the edge of the water. They primarily farm and raise herd animals for food, but they trade between cities for necessities and luxury goods.

The Ko-Fam-Att also trade the cities themselves. After one of the semiannual contests, the castes are allowed to choose whichever of their neighboring cities they desire to occupy. The choices are made in caste order so that the best game players have the best city—Fam-Att Ree, on the edge of an inland sea—with the most amenities and the best trade on which to grow wealthy. The players who fare worst earn their caste the least desirable city—Fam-Fin-Dam, an isolated and neglected outpost deep in the jungle. But such players are usually not around to share in the misfortune of living in such squalor because they have been killed in the game or torn apart by their traitor caste members.

Those who do not engage in Fam-Att at all are those who suffer the most. They have no particular place to dwell, no trade prospects, and nowhere to practice their Fam-Att skills. The Ko-Fam-Att hardly see this as unfair. No effort is to be wasted on those who seek to change the social order. These outsiders make their pitiful livings by

Ko-Fam-Att Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P4/H2

Homes: All jungle, plains, and river shores

Encounter Chance: Possible

Group Size: 3, or 21–30 (d20+10), or 25–200 (d8×25)

Organization: Hierarchical castes

Niche: Preindustrial agrarian

Intelligence: Sextant

Fam-Att

Fam-Att is so bloody a sport that it claims more Ko-Fam-Att lives every year than brewed or stolen-air attacks. The ground rules of the game do not specifically forbid killing opponents, and as the Ko-Fam-Att love the spectacle of bloodshed, the rules are not likely to change in that regard any time soon.

The game begins on a signal from the Ko-Fam-Att, who is the oldest player present. The players then enter the court, some charging up the walkway to the center and others taking up positions in the defense zones. The game ends when one team has placed the stuffed-bird ball, which starts in the center of the court, into the goal receptacle of the opposing team.

The Ko-Fam-Att's role between the beginning and end of the game is primarily to call time-outs to allow the ball to be returned after going out of bounds (see below). Otherwise, the Ko-Fam-Att acts as something of an announcer, calling out to the teams where the ball is. Fam-Att has no referee as such, as the Ko-Fam-Att's role is basically ceremonial.

Number of Players: Though each team can have as many players as they like, there can never be more than twenty members of a team on the court at the same time. The rest must wait outside their team's goal zone, where they are not allowed to interfere with the game in progress.

Zones: Fam-Att has two types of zones: offense zones and defense zones. The offense zones are the raised walkways surrounding the court. The defense zones are all of the other areas. Players forced off the court may only enter at the designated entry points at the ends of the main walkways, though it does not matter which team's entry point they re-enter through.

Players in other zones can attack anyone they can reach either in the same zone or in an adjacent zone. Players who wish to move from a defense zone to the offense zone may only exit the defense zone in the corner opposite the center of the court. Players who wish to enter the defense zone from the offense zone may do so at any point. (Some of Fam-Att's most spectacular battles occur when lone players become trapped in defense zones controlled by their opponents.)

The defense zones include a slightly raised walkway around the outside edge of the court. Players leaving the defense zone may make use of this walkway to reach the nearest offense zone walkway but cannot cross the offense zone walkway to reach the next defense zone walkway.

The offense zone's raised walkway includes raised platforms half a meter tall that put the player's feet about 1.5 meters above the floor of the defense zone. Particularly athletic Fam-Att players leap from platform to platform to evade attacks from the defense zones (Athletic-jump). The platforms are spaced 2 meters apart.

Carrying the Ball: Fam-Att's stuffed-bird ball measures just over 25 centimeters wide. Players use large, spool-like wooden paddles called *att-top* to handle the ball. The *att-top*

are also used as weapons in the game (and off the court, too, by regular players).

Players may carry or throw the ball using an *att-top*, but they may not touch the ball with their hands. Carrying or throwing the Fam-Att ball with an *att-top* paddle requires an Athletics-fam-att skill check. The modifiers for throwing the Fam-Att ball are the same as for throwing any object as discussed under the Athletics-throw skill in Chapter 4: Skills in the Player's Handbook (see Table F20: Accuracy by Range, especially).

Fouls: Although the Ko-Fam-Att does not actually referee the game, certain behavior is still considered a foul. Deliberately breaking any of the established rules about zones or about only using the *att-top* to handle the ball almost certainly elicits cries of outrage from the spectators.

If the offending player does not leave the game immediately, the opposing players often single him or her out for especially brutal treatment. If she or he somehow manages to overcome the attacks of other players, the spectators frequently rush onto the court to meet their own justice. Few players survive such an event.

Of course, the spectators of the offending player's caste quite often disagree that a foul was actually perpetrated, which can result in fights in the stands, on the court, and in the streets outside the arena. Long-standing feuds between castes have begun with a perceived foul in a Fam-Att game.

Winning: A Fam-Att team wins when they successfully place the ball in the other team's goal receptacle, which is located at the rear of the last raised platform on the walkway (where the opposing team comes onto the court). The game technically ends at this point, but the Ko-Fam-Att recognizes that many fights between players will still be going on. Unless both combatants choose to separate (or are pulled apart, which is rare), they are usually allowed to end their fight. Otherwise, both players may feel they need to resume the fight later.

Conversely, a late hit—attacking another player after the game has ended but before the players have left the field—is considered a foul, just like any other. A player can sometimes get away with this behavior once, but seldom twice.

Out of Bounds: The ball frequently leaves the Fam-Att court. When it does, the Ko-Fam-Att calls a time-out to return it to the starting position. During this time, all of the players must also leave the field. The Ko-Fam-Att usually uses this time to call for the wounded and dead to be removed from the court.

Tactics: Common tactics for advanced Fam-Att players include using two players to actually hold the ball, which minimizes the chance that it might be knocked loose. Some players get in position at the opposing goal while a teammate throws the ball to them. The player at the goal then merely shoots the ball into the goal, thus fulfilling the condition of placing it in the receptacle. (Throwing it into the receptacle with the *att-top* from afar is considered bad form.)

scavenging in the garbage of the other castes, by performing the disgusting tasks that the other castes will not perform, or by slaughtering through the price for stealing even a table scrap from one of a higher caste is death.

A few of these outsiders choose to dwell in the jungles, forming communes where they can pioneer their own new social order. Some idealistic members of higher castes occasionally abandon their caste to pursue a casteless life on their own terms. Ko-Fam-Att history denies the existence of these people, so whether they succeeded or not is unknown.

The Ko-Fam-Att take their caste system very seriously. Lower caste members are only allowed to speak to upper caste members when they are addressed. Those Ko-Fam-Att who ignore this rule risk severe and occasionally fatal beatings. Likewise, those who do not vacate their dwellings quickly enough for the new residents are usually dragged out of their homes and beaten. Their possessions are confiscated or burned. A Ko-Fam-Att even suspected of cheating at the game is nearly always banished—a fate equivalent at best to death, and at worst to becoming one of the homeless, casteless invisibles ignored by the rest of Ko-Fam-Att society.



Ko-Fam-Att Game Data

STR 11 (d6+6) INT 10 (d6+6)
 DEX 12 (d6+8) WIL 12 (d6+8)
 CON 6 (d4+6) PER 8 (d4+6)
 Durability: 11/11/6/6 Action check: 11+/10/5/2
 Move: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4 #Actions: 2
 Reflex score: Marginal/1 Last resorts: 1

Attacks

Unarmed	9/4/2	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s	L/O
Spear	11/5/2	d4w/d4+2w/d4m	L/O
Att-top	11/5/2	d4+2s/d4+1w/d4+2w	L/O
Dagger	11/5/2	d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w	L/O

Defenses

no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 no INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 +1 WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 +1 resistance modifier vs. poisons
 Armor: none (L), none (M), none (E)

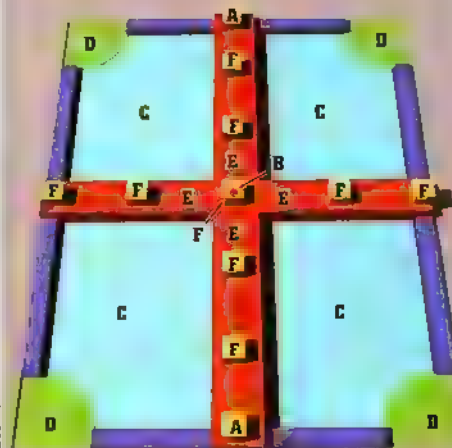
Skills

Athletics [9], climb [10], fam-att [11], Melee [9], hide [11],
 bludgeon [11], Unarmed Attack [9], Acrobatics [10], Stamina
 [11], Survival [11], Knowledge [10], Awareness [11], percep-
 tion [13], Deception [10], Interaction [10].

The Ko-Fam-Att do not have religious beliefs as such. They recognize no deities. They have no creation myths, no particular explanation for natural events, and no concept of an afterlife. The oral history of the earliest major event recalls a time when several warring tribes met to discuss joining together to eradicate a particularly vicious animal species that was preying on all the tribes more or less equally. When the beasts were all destroyed, the decimated tribes met again to decide how to divide the lands that had been freed of the threat. Though Ko-Fam-Att legend states that the tribes readily hit upon the notion of using a children's game to decide, the process took several generations to formalize. The initial allocation was decided more or less randomly.

The addition of Fam-Att did not curtail conflict among the people. To this day, the Ko-Fam-Att periodically mount raids against other castes in which previously ascendant castes can find themselves down to but a handful of warriors and forced to abandon their hard-won city to ensure the survival of their caste. Such disputes inevitably arise out of the game. Wars are waged over unfair or

Fam-Att Court



Fam-Att Court Key

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A. Entry point and goal | D. Defense-to-offense entry point |
| B. Ball | E. Raised walkways |
| C. Defense zones | F. Raised platforms |

impolite conduct, or because winning the game left few able-bodied warriors in the caste and the rest of the caste is unable to maintain the holdings their athletes won.

Distinguishing oneself in battle is currently the only way for a Ko-Fam-Att to advance through the caste system without playing the game. Doing so does not advance the entire caste, however. Only the warrior and his or her immediate family are invited to join a higher caste. Such an occurrence is extremely rare. Such promotion is reserved for the greatest of heroes, though Ko-Fam-Att legends tell humorous stories of other castes who mistakenly invited fortunate cowards into their ranks only to discover at the worst possible moment that the heroic warrior was only an extremely fortunate coward.

Xiim-Xiir

Despite the Ko-Fam-Att carefully explaining the dangers of the xiim-xiir to us, I did not take them all that seriously. Then one morning I awoke to the horrible realization that one of them was in my tent. A two-hour standoff ensued until I remained absolutely still under the creature's watchful stare until my desperate mental pleas for help were finally heard by Dr. Veras. With great difficulty, she managed to convince the creature that it was not so hungry that it couldn't pass up this one meal. —RG, CLA

Administrator Grant was in the most danger when I tried to convince the xiim-xiir that he was a brrrowl. Obviously, I did not understand the xiim-xiir's interest in the administrator. Fortunately, Grant's reflexes were up to the task of evading the beast long enough for me to try a different tack —AV, CSS

Description: A xiim-xiir (zhim ZHEER) is a serpentine creature some 4 meters in length, with vestigial forelimbs and several clusters



of sensory pods descending from just behind its circular mouth. From its mouth protrudes a series of small, needle-like teeth, a sort of ovipositor that it uses to inject its eggs into its victims. The rest of its body is an unremarkable, uniform blue. It weighs an average of 35 kilograms.

Encounter The xim-xir eats mainly small prey—nothing larger than a rodent or house pet, for example. But when a xim-xir lays a clutch of eggs, it seeks a warm nest for its young. For the xim-xir, this means the decaying corpse of a living being. The larger the corpse, the better, since that means more of the young survive. And if a suitable corpse is not available, the xim-xir creates one.

The xim-xir only attacks a living being larger than itself when it is ready to lay its eggs and cannot locate a large, fresh corpse. It approaches by stealth and observes the living being for quite some time to determine if it is truly alive. (Since the xim-xir lays eggs only once every few years, it cannot afford to make a mistake.) It tests for respiration, body heat, and most importantly, movement. It only attacks if it senses at three from the same target.

Those beings aware of the xim-xir's intentions can try to confuse it by remaining absolutely still until the creature loses interest. Outlasting the xim-xir requires a complex Stealth *hide* skill, check and a total of 9 successes, or 6 successes, if the character can also reduce respiration or decrease body temperature voluntarily. If the character accumulates the requisite number of successes, the xim-xir departs in search of a better target.

These skill checks may be attempted at the end of each round. On any Failure result, the xim-xir makes an experimental strike attack—without employing its ovipositor—to try to startle the target into



Xim-Xir Ecological Data

Biomechanics: Series 1
Environment: Class 1
GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P4/H2
Homes: All jungle
Encounter Chance: Slim
Group Size: 1-4 (d4)
Organization: Solitary
Niche: Carnivore (venomous)
Intelligence: Low-order animal

Xim-Xir Game Data

STR 14 (d4+8) **INT** 2 (Animal 6 or d4+3)
DEX 14 (d4+12) **WIL** 11 (d6+6)
CON 9 (d4+7) **PER** 2 (Animal 6 or d4+3)
Ability: 3/3/5/5 **Action check:** 17+/16/14
Moves: run 22, walk 6 **#Actions:** 2
Reaction score: Good/2

Attacks

Bite 14/7/5 d4+1w/d4+1w/d4+3w L/J/Q
 plus poison (see text)

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d6 (L), d4 (H), d4 (En)

Skills

Unarmed [10]—**brav** [14]; **Stealth** [14]—**hide** [16], **sneak** [18];
Stamina [9]—**endurance** [10]; **Awareness** [11]—**intuition** [16],
perception [16].

reacting. (Roll the attack and damage, but no poison is administered.) If the target attempts to remain still during this attack, the attack receives a -2 step bonus.

If the target accumulates 3 or more failures—or attempts any physical action—the xim-xir strikes with its ovipositor deployed. On any attack that inflicts wound damage, an egg sac has been successfully inserted into the victim's body. As it breaks down in the blood stream, it releases an insulative neurotoxin with an onset time of 2 minutes and a duration of only 10 minutes. At the end of the onset time, the poison runs its course over the duration of attack. Roll a Constitution feat check to determine damage. This feat check has +3 step penalty. A Critical Failure inflicts d6+1w, a Failure, d4+1w, an Ordinary success, d6+1w, a Good success, d6+1w, and an Amazing, d6+1s. Divide the damage over the duration (10 minutes). Poisoning can be treated with Medical Science—*treatment* as described in the Hazards section of Chapter 3. Gamemasters in Action in the *Gamemaster Guide*. If the victim survives, the eggs wash harmlessly out of his or her system within the next week.

An accidentally encountered xim-xir responds with a similar attack, though the neurotoxin surrounding the egg sac is considerably weaker and has an onset time of 15 minutes, a -2 step bonus to the victim's Constitution feat check, and a duration of 30 minutes.

Habitat Society The xim-xir is not a social animal, though it does not actively avoid others of its own kind. In general, it dwells anywhere that food and potential nests are plentiful. Those requirements make the xim-xir common around Ko-Pam-Ait settlements. The Ko-Pam-Ait have learned the hard way to sleep surrounded by a kind of mesh screen. They are fanatical about maintaining these and properly closing them at night. Ko-Pam-Ait children are often beaten mercilessly for failing to adequately seal their sleeping screens. Those that do not learn perish, one way or the other.

XIM XIR



53

GALVIN



On my initial visit to the Algernon system, I could not visit the planet Galvin. The endless war raging between that planet and its neighbor Altar has made the government of Algernon's third planet more than a little bit paranoid. Recently, thanks largely to the auspices of a good friend of mine in the Galactic Concord's diplomatic mission to Galvin, I was allowed to correct this deficiency.

Although I traveled into the wilderness, I spent a great deal of time working with the staff of the National Zoo at Fort Drum. Not only did these people have an excellent reference library on the local ecology, they were helpful and friendly. In fact, I came to the conclusion that my visits to the wild were actually far less informative than the time I was spending at the zoo.

At the risk of sounding like a commercial, I would be remiss if I did not encourage everyone who reads these papers to find time to visit this outstanding facility. Admission isn't cheap, but I doubt anyone will feel overcharged at the end of the day.—AM, CSS

Galvin is a world that many might deem uninhabitable or, at the very least, undesirable. With surface temperatures reaching to over 50° C at the equator in summer and an atmosphere that has been described as only slightly less humid than sea water, most people find the planet impossible to tolerate. Of course, the original settlers were of Altarian stock. They viewed the taming of so inhospitable a planet as nothing less than a challenge to be overcome. Indeed, some say that they would have passed this planet by if it had been more pleasant.

Galvin

Parent: Algernon, G5	Surface Gravity: 0.59 g
Orbital Radius: 0.89 AU	Atmosphere: N ₂ , O ₂
Orbital Period: 523 days	Pressure: 0.91 atm
Rotation Period: 29.5 hours	Median Temperature: 27° C
Axial Tilt: Moderate (18.3°)	Satellites: One
Diameter: 11,758 km	GRAFM: G2/R1/A2/T3/H2
Density (Earth=1): 0.97	

National Zoo

On the fringes of Fort Drum stands a wide expanse of light, airy forests. From a distance, this large stand of trees looks pristine and undeveloped. Upon closer examination, the buildings and habitats of the National Zoo at Fort Drum can be seen peaking through the foliage.

The National Zoo is generally recognized as the premier wildlife display in the Varga. It combines an outstanding scientific facility with an excellent educational center and, recognizing that many people just want to gaze at animals, features an outstanding entertainment schedule. The animals kept here are displayed in natural environments replicating the various terrain types and biomes found on Galvin: temperate lowlands (primarily grasslands and rangelands), temperate highlands (clumps of trees, forests, hills, and tall swaying grasses), tropical rainforests and thick jungles, tropical littoral regions (hot swamps and wetlands full of stagnant water), polar plains, polar littoral regions (near temperate coastlands), and the sea.

Chord

Chords are some of the largest, most imposing creatures I have ever seen. Incredibly curious and with an appetite that seems to include everything and anything shy of rock and iron, they are often depicted as comic and lovable in the local media.—AV, CSS

The chord is a massive, slow-moving creature found in the highlands of Galvin. Used as a beast of burden by the locals, these creatures are far more intelligent than they first seem to be. Underestimating them has resulted many wilderness camps being leveled.

Description An adult female chord measures up to 4 meters in height and roughly the same in length. On the average, these massive creatures weigh between 8 and 10 tons. Males are slightly smaller than females and seldom reach weights in excess of 9 tons.

Although more or less reptilian in appearance, a chord's body is shaped rather like a sloth. It has an arched back, a low-slung head, and a long, tapering tail. The creature's eyes are big, bright, and keen, giving the animal a look of intelligence and understanding.

A chord's body is covered with heavy scales thick enough to turn



away most hand-held weapons and even small arms fire. Beyond this, a chord is naturally resistant to pain and injury, so it can survive wounds that might seem lethal to an untrained observer. Although the drab, olive coloration of its scales provides it with fair camouflage, the chord has no natural enemies. The local predators long ago gave up on trying to kill these massive, heavily armored creatures.

The chord normally meanders about on all fours, but it has little trouble balancing on its hind legs when it wishes. Indeed, it often does this when trying to reach fruit at the top of a tree. The animal's forelegs end in long, slender toes. These digits are very numble, although the creature lacks an opposable thumb.

Encounter Chords are not an uncommon sight in the highland regions of Galvin. They move about in family groups, stripping the leaves from trees, pulling down choice pieces of fruit, and occasionally snatching a fish from the water to add a little meat to their diet.

Chords are often encountered in the wilderness by explorers who leave open food or garbage in their camps. The smell attracts the fearless chords, which are more than willing to walk right into a camp and help themselves to whatever appeals to them. Indeed, chords have learned that human explorers are easy sources of food, they sometimes follow a group or make their homes near frequently traveled trails.

Although chords are not aggressive, they can be destructive. These creatures are so powerful that they can easily rip through tents when they smell food inside. In fact, they find it just as easy to break into unarmored vehicles by breaking windows or tearing off doors. They have even broken through walls to ransack cabins or other structures.

It is difficult to provoke a chord. They are slow to anger and generally just ignore anything that tries to hurt them. When a chord is moved to violence, it simply rears up and drops down on its tormentor. Few creatures can survive the brunt of a chord's massive weight.

Habitat Society: Chords mate for life and are normally found moving about in the company of their partners. Occasionally they are encountered in the company of a single offspring. These massive animals can live to be one hundred years old, dying only when age or illness overcomes their hardy constitutions.

The colonists of Galvin often use trained chords as beasts of bur-



den. Although they require a large quantity of food to maintain, they are tireless workers who pick up new tasks quickly and easily.

Bobo and Toni are a mated pair of chords captured in the highland regions north of Fort Drum. They had begun to regularly raid a hydroponic farm and were removed to prevent their destruction. Please do not feed the chords.

—Informational Plaque, National Zoo at Fort Drum

Chord Game Data

STR 20	(d4+18)	INT 4	(Animal 13 or 2d4+8)
DEX 4	(d4+1)	WIL 11	(d4+8)
CON 16	(d4+17)	PER 4	(Animal 13 or d4+11)
Durability: 32/32/16/16		Action check: 5+/6/4/2	
Move: run 20, walk 6		#Actions: 2	
Reaction Score: Marginal/1			

Attacks

Crush ¹	10/5/2	3d6s/2d6w/2d4m	11/6
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¹ +1 sleep penalty.

Defenses

Good toughness
+3 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d6+3 (L), d6 (H), d6+1 (En)

Skills

Manipulation [4], Movement [16]—trailblazing [15], Stamina [16]—endurance [19], resist pain [20], Awareness [11]—intuition [12], perception [13], investigate [11]—search [13], track [14], Resolve [11]—physical [20].

Chord Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Habits: Temperate hills and woodlands (highlands)

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 2; very rarely 1 or 3 (d4+2)

Organization: Mated pair

Niche: Omnivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

Haze Colony

In the steaming morasses of Galvin's tropical regions, it is difficult to see a haze colony until it's right on top of you. By then it's far too late.—**AV, CSS**

Haze colonies are collections of microbes held in a vaporous suspension. They drift about on the slow stagnant breezes of the tropics and attack any creature they come into contact with.

Description: Several varieties of haze colony infest different regions of Galvin, although they appear to be identical, unless viewed through a microscope. From a distance, they look like nothing more than a cloud of white vapor.

The average cloud measures between 3 and 5 meters across. It has an irregular shape, and it ripples as it flows over and around the objects in its path.

When examined more closely with scientific magnifying instruments or gauntlets, the true nature of the haze becomes apparent. It is composed of millions upon millions of microbes. These creatures are linked together by very fine filaments that serve to bind them into a colony. In addition, these lenuous strands act as a sail, catching even the slightest movement in the air and carrying the colony from place to place.

Encounter: When a haze colony comes into contact with exposed flesh, it immediately attacks. Depending on the type of haze encountered, the effects of this contamination vary.

The Gamemaster can roll on the following table to determine exactly what type of hazard a given haze colony presents. Exposure to the haze colony is treated as either a disease or some form of contact poison. Roll once to determine the effect of the cloud and a second time to determine its strength as indicated by a step modifier to the victim's Constitution test check.

d20 Roll	Contamination Effect	Constitution Test Check Adj.
1-8	Disease	None
9-10	Hemotoxin	-1 step bonus
11-12	Neurotoxin	-1 step bonus
13-14	Necrotoxin	+1 step penalty
15-16	Cauterizing agent	+1 step penalty
17-18	Paralytic	+2 step penalty
19-20	Irritant	+2 step penalty

Because the haze colony is actually more of a hazard than a creature that can be encountered, interacted with, fought, or outsmarted, contact with a haze colony is resolved in accordance with the rules presented to Hazards section of Chapter 3 Gamemasters in Action in the *Gamemaster Guide*. In the case of a disease-causing cloud, the colony has an incubation time as indicated on the following chart. Those clouds that act like poisons have onset times and durations also indicated on the chart. The effects, whether disease or poison, are spread by contact.

d20 Roll	Disease Incubation	Poison Onset	Poison Duration
1-5	d4 weeks	d4 days	10 minutes
6-10	2d4 days	2d4 hours	30 minutes
11-15	d4 days	d4 hours	1 hour
16-20	3d4 hours	3d4 minutes	10 hours

In the wake of contact with a haze colony, explorers can treat themselves with antitoxins and disinfectants. Because so many strains of haze colony exist, medical rolls for the diagnosis and treatment of their effects are made with a +2 step penalty for offworld physicians or with a +1 step penalty for natives of Galvin.

The microorganisms comprising haze colonies are adapted to survival in tropical or subtropical environments. As such, they can not survive in cooler climates, and they die off in temperatures below about 15° C.

Habitat/Society: As their name implies, haze colonies are not individual creatures. Instead, they are complex communities of microorganisms. Although the microbes making up an individual colony share some common features, several dozen different types of organisms can coexist in any given cloud. Because of the variety of lifeforms on one colony and the varieties of colony, haze colony contamination is difficult to diagnose and treat.

In this case is an example of the haze colonies found in the world's equatorial marshes. Although this looks like steam or some other form of vapor, it is actually a large colony of microscopic organisms living as a communal entity.

Scientists from the National Zoo are studying the haze colonies and tracking their movements. Some evidence indicates that these communities are spreading from their traditional habitats.

—**Informational Plaque, National Zoo at Fort Brown**

Haze Colony Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 1
GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2
Homes: Tropical swamps
Encounter Chance: Slim
Group Size: 1
Organization: Solitary
Niche: Microbe colony
Intelligence: None



Jazelle

Because of its elusive nature and gleaming black coat, the jazelle is often stalked by sport hunters on Gaivin. I'm happy to say that the authorities carefully regulate this sport, however it would not be difficult to imagine this wonderful creature being hunted into extinction by the greedy or the overenthusiastic.

This is not to say that the jazelle isn't without its own defenses. These creatures are found throughout the polar regions of the planet and must often escape the swift and deadly tagger if they are to survive.—**AV, CSS**

The jazelle is a long, lithe herbivore similar in many ways to the antelope and deer of Earth. The original settlers of this planet named the jazelle for its resemblance to the Terran gazelle.

Description: The body of a jazelle is lean and angular. It is built for running, leaping, and speed. They are born with a smoky-gray coat, although this darkens to a midnight black by the time the creature becomes a yearling.

A healthy adult jazelle generally stands some 2 meters tall at the head and runs some 2.5 meters from its snout to the tip of its long, slender tail. The top of the creature's head is crowned with three long, slender horns that are white or yellow-white in color. Adults weigh an average of 55 kilograms.

Encounter: Jazelles are timid nocturnal creatures that are usually encountered only by those who deliberately set out to find them. They are a favorite food of large carnivores such as the tagger and have learned to keep a watchful eye out for predators.

If a herd of jazelles are threatened, their first defense is to bolt and run. In such cases, their speed and endurance often allow them to escape unharmed even from very swift hunters. Of course, the injured, sick, and elderly cannot keep up when the herd flees, so these often serve to draw off pursuers as well.

When cornered or defending its young, the jazelle throws off its timid demeanor and proves that it is hardly helpless. In such cases, it rears up like a horse and delivers a powerful kick with its front legs or bands low and strikes backward with its rear legs. It cannot employ both of these attacks in a single round, however.

If something moves in front of a speeding jazelle,

Jazelle Game Data

STR 9	(d4+6)	INT 2	(Animal 0 or 2d4+3)
DEX 14	(2d4+9)	WIL 10	(d4+7)
CON 10	(d4+7)	PER 3	(Animal 0 or d6+5)
Durability: 10/10/5/5		Action check: 15+/14/7/3	
Move: sprint 60, run 40, walk 14, (jump 10) #Actions: 2			
Reaction score: Ordinary/2			

Attacks

Kick (x2)	9/5/2	d4s/d6s/d4w	LI/O
Gore	12/6/3	d4w/d4+2w/d4m	LI/O
Trample	10/5/2	d6s/d8s/d4+1w	LI/O

Defenses

no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: None (LI), none (HI), none (EX)

Skills

Athletics [5]-jump [13], Unarmed [5]-brand [10], Movement [10]-race [11], Stamina [10]-endurance [12], Awareness [10]-intuition [12], perception [12], Resolve [10]-physical [12]

the creature's natural instinct is to lower its head and gore the intruder with its tridentlike horns. In most cases, anyone attacked in this fashion is also trampled immediately afterward.



Jazelle Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Homes: Polar grasslands and tundra (polar tundra)

Encounter Chance: Slim

Group Size: 10-40 (d4x10)

Organization: Herd

Niche: Herbivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

Habitat Society. Jazelles are herd animals that move about in groups averaging twenty members. They feed on leaves, grasses, and other plants. They are very fond of fruit and have often been lured into the open by hunters laying out such treats as bait.

A jazelle mates in autumn, carries its single foal through the winter, and gives birth in spring. The young can walk and run almost from birth and quickly join their parents in foraging for their own

food. It takes a jazelle about three years to reach maturity, and a typical jazelle lives between 15 and 20 years if it manages to escape the jaws of a hungry predator or the sights of a hunter's rifle.

Jazelle hunting is a popular sport on Galvin because the natural speed and timidity of these creatures makes them challenging prey. Commercial pelaris cost \$500 per person. These generally provide would-be hunters with a guide and a license to kill one (and only one) jazelle. Individual hunting licenses that also cost \$500 allow sport hunters to bring home as many as six jazelles per season. In addition to their fur, jazelles are prized for their meat.

Ruvert and Elma were born in the wild but lured into the company of humans by an overly friendly farm family. They were fed and gradually lost their fear of human beings. When it proved impossible to reverse this conditioning, they were brought to the zoo to protect them from hunters. Visitors with keen eyes will notice a pattern of white scars on Ruvert's flank. These are the result of a legger attack he suffered when he was a yearling.

—Informational Plaque, National Zoo at Fort Drum

Moore Rat

Moore rats are ferocious carnivores that sustain themselves primarily on carrion. From time to time, they attack living creatures. I saw this one night when we were watching a family of dew boars from a blind. One of them was sick or injured, and it lay down in the shade of a large shrub. The next thing I knew, the creature let out a cry of pain. Moore rats were all over it, ripping the flesh from its still-living body. They stripped the animal clean in a matter of minutes, but I had long since stopped watching. **—AV, CSS**

Although seldom seen, these tiny creatures are always underfoot in Galvin's tropical forests and jungles. Under normal conditions, they avoid explorers and other large creatures in their search for carrion. When food is scarce, they swarm forth to devour living creatures.

Description: Moore rats are small mammals that weigh less than 4 kilograms each. They average about 25 centimeters from the tips of their snouts to the ends of their stubby tails. They have short, slender legs and can move fairly rapidly.

Moore rats have a very rapid metabolism, meaning that they are constantly on the prowl for something to eat. They frequently snack on small insects, but they subsist primarily on carrion.

Encounter The typical encounter with moore rats begins only after a creature has died. From their hiding places beneath shrubs and under bushes, they swarm out to strip clean the bones of the dead.

Moore rats can deliver a painful bite when cornered or handled. Although this can inflict a minor wound, the larger problem is that the bite carries with it the danger of disease and infection. Anyone bitten by one of these filthy animals and suffering who suffers one or more points of primary damage must make a Constitution test check with a +1 step bonus to resist the disease. This roll is con-

Moore Rat Game Data

STR 2	(d6-2)	INT 3	(Animal 5 or d4+2)
DEX 9	(d8+4)	WIL 6	(d4+3)
CON 2	(d4-1)	PER 2	(Animal 6 or d4+3)
Durability: 2/2/1/1		Action check: 12+/11/5/2	
Move: sprint 36, run 24, walk 10		#Actions: 1	
Reaction score: Marginal/1			

Attacks

Bite ¹	Q/3/1	1s/1m/1s	0/0
Stomach acid	CON feat ²	varies ²	Env 0

¹ Can wound disease, see text.

² Victim must make a Constitution test check to resist effects. Amazing or Good success, no damage. Ordinary, d4-2w, Failure d4-1w, Critical Failure, d4w.

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: None (L), none (H), none (En)

Skills

Unarmed [2]-brawl [6], Acrobatics [3]-dodge [12], Stealth [9]-hide [12], sneak [13], Stamina [2]-endurance [6], Awareness [6]-intuition [10], perception [11].

Moore Rat Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Homes: Tropical rainforests and jungles

Encounter Chance: Slim

Group Size: 5-20 (5d4)

Organization: Pack

Niche: Scavenger (carnivore)

Intelligence: High-order animal



ducted in accordance with the normal rules for disease in the Hazards section of Chapter 3, *Game Masters in Action* in the *Game Master Guide*. The disease carried by moor rats has an incu-

bation time of d4 days before its symptoms manifest. Remember that diseases can be treated preemptively by means of the *Medicine* treatment skill.

When moor rats are surprised, they often respond by constricting their stomachs and releasing a stream of acid. This caustic agent is less potent than those described in the *Game Master Guide*. It inflicts damage determined by the result of the victim's Constitution test check as shown on the following chart.

Check Result	Damage
Critical Failure	d4w
Failure	d4-1w
Ordinary	d4-2w
Good	None
Amazing	None

An individual moor rat can spit acid in this fashion only once per hour. It is important to note that this is strictly a reflex that is employed only when the animal is surprised. Moor rats do not ever use this attack intentionally.

Habitat/Society: Moor rats are nomadic creatures, wandering through the humid expanses of Galvin's steaming tropical jungles. They are generally encountered in packs of between five and twenty rats.

Moor rats are always in motion, moving to and fro in search of something to eat. Indeed, they do not even sleep. This luxury has been denied them because their rapid metabolism requires an almost constant intake of food.

If you look carefully, you'll notice our colony of ten moor rats moving around in the undergrowth or swimming in the marsh areas of this exhibit. These animals were captured within the walls of the zoo itself, when they wandered inside in 2500.

—Informational Plaque, National Zoo at Fort Drum



The lowlands of Galvin include long, rolling expanses of grasslands, stretches of shallow seas, and wetlands teeming with life. It was during a short trip to the latter region that I first encountered the swift, predatory birds known to the locals as spitfires.

It was this meeting that changed my opinion of the government mandate requiring me to travel in the company of an army officer at all times. If not for the quick actions young Lieutenant Gauge, I might very well have perished then and there.—**AV, CSS**

Spitfires are an unusual species of carnivorous birds found in the scattered wetlands of Galvin's middle latitudes and lowlands. They live and hunt in small flocks, working together to bring down larger animals much like a pack of wolves on Earth might combine their efforts when attacking an elk or similar animal.

Description: An individual spitfire weighs about 5 kilograms and has a wing span of between 75 and 125 centimeters. They are black in color but have bright red or orange pinfeathers. The beak of a spitfire is hooked and very sharp. It is well designed for ripping flesh from a fallen creature.

Encounter: Spitfires are often heard in the distance long before they attack. These creatures are very territorial, and their shrill, warbling cry is a warning to other birds, especially rival flocks of spitfires, to keep their distance. As a rule, a flock of spitfires claim a region between 3 and 5 kilometers in diameter.

Despite their wicked talons and sharp beaks, spitfires do not begin their attacks by biting or slashing their prey. Instead, they swoop down and dart through the air around a potential victim while releasing a fine spray. Although the spray takes the form of a small cloud, it is not large enough to endanger more than one individual. Therefore, each bird must attack a specific target when it makes its first pass. A given spitfire can spray only once per hour.

The spitfire's spray is a powerful irritant that causes choking, burning, and tearing of the eyes. The spitfire's spray is considered a contact irritant with an instant onset time and a duration of 10 minutes. Victims make a Constitution test check that determines the effect. A Critical Failure inflicts a +3 step penalty to all actions, a Failure, a +2 step penalty, an Ordinary success, a +1 step penalty, and Good and Amazing successes result in the irritant having no effect.

The nature of the spitfire's chemical spray is such that many hu-

Spitfire Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 1
GRAPH: G2/A1/A2/P3/H2
Homes: Temperate wetlands (temperate lowlands)
Encounter Chance: Slim
Group Size: 4-16 (4d4)
Organization: Flock
Niche: Carnivore
Intelligence: High-order animal

Spitfire Game Data

STR 5 (d4+2) **INT** 2 (Animal 7 or d6+3)
DEX 14 (2d4+9) **WIL** 10 (d4+7)
CON 3 (d4) **PER** 2 (Animal 5 or d4+2)
Durability: 3/3/2/2 **Action check:** 14+/13/6/3
Move: walk 8, fly 80 **#Actions:** 1
Reaction score: Ordinary/1

Attacks

Spray	10 ¹	as contact poison ²	LL/O
Talons	11/5/3	d4s/d4w/d4+1w	LL/O
Beak	8/4/2	d4s/d4+2s/d4w	LL/O

¹ Spray affects hit or miss (no degree of success)

² See text

Defenses

no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: None (LL), none (HL), none (En)

Skills

Unarmed [5]-brawl [8], Acrobatics [14]-flight [15], Stamina [3]-endurance [8], Awareness [10]-sleuthing [11], perception [13], Resolve [10]-physical [11].

mans are highly allergic to it. When a human character first encounters it, a Constitution feat check is required beyond that made to normally determine damage of the attack itself. If the result is a Failure, the character treats the spray as paralytic agent instead of an irritant. Apply the following effects instead of those described above. A Critical Failure on the Constitution feat check causes paralyzation for d4 days, a Failure causes paralyzation for 6d4 hours, an Ordinary success causes paralyzation for d4 hours, a Good success inflicts only a +1 step penalty on all physical actions for the poison's duration, and an Amazing success has no effect.

In the event of a Critical Failure on the allergy Constitution feat check, the spray is treated as a neurotoxin instead of an irritant. (A Critical Failure inflicts d6+1m, a Failure, d4+1m, an Ordinary suc-



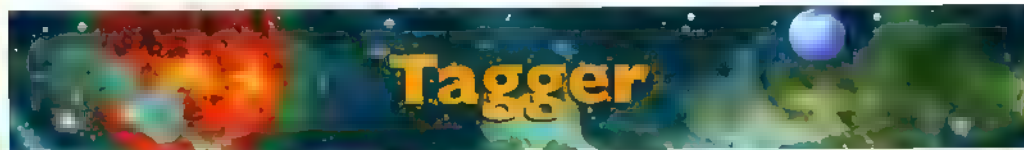
cess, d8+1w, a Good success, d6+1w, and an Amazing success, d6+1s.) The onset time remains instant and the duration instantaneous to either case. Poisoning can be treated with Medical Science-treatment as described in the Hazards section of Chapter 3 Gamemasters in Action in the *Gamemaster Guide*.

After each bird in the flock has made its initial pass, it swoops away and returns in one round to rip and tear at the flesh of its victims. It does this via a series of swift passes with its sharp talons. Only after a creature falls to the ground does the spitfire land on it and begin to employ its beak.

Habitat/Society The spitfire is obviously a very dangerous animal. As such, it is frequently removed from the areas in which humans have opted to settle. Since these birds are almost impossible to frighten away from a region they have claimed as their own, this usually means capturing and relocating the flock—or simply killing the birds outright.

The National Zoo maintains a small flock of six spitfires. For the safety of both our guests and the staff who must work with them, these birds have had their spray glands removed. The zoo's spitfires were captured near the settlement of Cranston's Lament to save them from an ordinance offering a bounty for their deaths.

—Informational Plaque, National Zoo at Fort Drum



I first saw the powerful tagger in the National Zoo at Fort Drum. I couldn't help but marvel at the creature. Slender and aerodynamic, it looked like some manner of great cat when seen as a silhouette. When it moved into the sunlight, I saw that it was a reptilian creature covered with fine scales that almost gleamed. If forced to describe the animal, I

would say that it looked like a cross between a leopard and a cobra.

I made certain to be near the tagger when feeding time rolled around. As the beast refuses to eat anything but live meat, I knew this would be something of a spectacle. Indeed, it was the most well attended event of the day.

Never in my life have I seen a more efficient hunter than the tagger. One moment it was sunning itself on the far side of the polar plains exhibit, and the next it was little more than a blur moving through the grass. If I hadn't been watching the bounding jessie released for the tagger's meal, I never would have seen the kill.

—AV, CSS

The tagger is by far the most deadly and efficient hunter found in Galvin's polar grasslands. Moving swiftly on its four powerful legs, these predators can run down even the fastest of that region's deer-like herbivores.

Description: An adult tagger is roughly 1.5 meters in length and height. It possesses a gaunt musculature similar in many ways to a Terran greyhound, weighing only 70 kilograms. A tagger walks with long, loping steps, swinging its flat, triangular head from side to side with each stride. The thin, muscular legs of the tagger end in broad, flat feet. The animal's three retractable claws are extended when the tagger attacks but are usually drawn in when it runs. The tagger's narrow, "v" shaped mouth is filled with a fine row of thin, razor-sharp teeth.

Taggers are covered with fine scales very similar to those of Terran serpents. These glisten under bright light, giving the false impression that the creature might be oily to the touch. During the summer months, the tagger's scales are a mottled green in color, allowing the animal to blend in perfectly with the grasslands where it

hunts. In winter, when the polar plains turn dry and the grasses yellow, so too do the tagger's scales.

Encounter: In the wild, most people don't see a tagger until it attacks. Even then, the beast often appears as a streak of color visible only for a second. Taggers are hungry creatures and make a kill as often as twice a day. They usually hunt at sunrise and sunset, sleeping through the rest of the day and night.

A tagger is not opposed to attacking a group of characters, for taggers usually chase down and kill herd animals. Of course, they expect such victims to turn and run, not attempt to repel their attacks.

When a tagger attacks, it charges forward at terrific speed, sprinting at twice its normal running rate. It can sustain this speed for only d4 rounds before it must give up the chase or continue it at its normal running rate. As a rule, the creature ends its hunt by leaping several meters onto its prey and driving the hapless victim to the ground.

Once in close combat, the animal finishes off its prey with its powerful claws and keen teeth. Given the tagger's skill as a hunter and its deadly natural weapons, few animals can hope to survive an encounter with this cunning predator.

Habitat/Society: The tagger is a solitary hunter, although taggers are often found residing in family groups of three or four. In such cases, these are parents with one or two young. As a rule, one parent hunts while the other remains with the young. For some reason that has never been explained, the females usually hunt in the morning, and the males assume the task in the evening.

Keena, the zoo's oldest resident tagger, was taken into captivity by scientists after she was abandoned by her parents. Although she's now some 165 centimeters from snout to tail, she was considered a runt by her parents and left to die.

—Informational Plaque, National Zoo at Fort Drum

Tagger Ecological Data

Biomechanics: Series I

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Homes: Polar grasslands and swamps (polar littoral)

Encounter Chance: Slim

Group Size: 1-4 (d4)

Organization: Solitary or family group

Niche: Large predator (carnivore)

Intelligence: High-order animal

Tagger Game Data

STR 11 (d6+7) **INT 3** (Animal 11 or d4+8)

DEX 12 (2d6+8) **WIL 13** (2d4+8)

CON 11 (2d6+8) **PER 3** (Animal 10 or d4+7)

Durability: 11/11/6/6 **Action Check:** 14+/13/6/3

Move: sprint 70', run 36, walk 12, (jump 8) **#Actions:** 3

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

¹ Can only sustain for d4 rounds

Attacks

Claw (x2) 14/7/3 d4+1s/d4+1w/d6+1w LI/0

Bite 14/7/3 d4w/d6+1w/d4m LI/0

Resistances

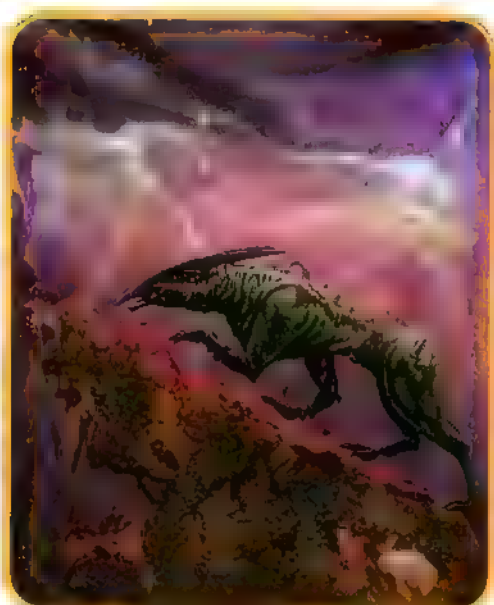
+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: d4-2 (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Skills

Athletics [11]-jump [13]; **Unarmed** [11]-brawl [14]; **Acrobatics** [12]-dodge [14], fall [13]; **Stealth** [12]-hide [15], shadow [13]; **smack** [13]; **Movement** [11]-race [16]; **Awareness** [13]-intuition [14], perception [14]; **Investigate** [13]-track [14]; **Resolve** [13]-physical [14].



INFORMATIONAL
PLACQUE



01

STORM

A century and a half ago, a Rignumar survey team explored the Loran system. They found a moon circling Salenancia that was, by some standards, capable of supporting human life. They gave this world a name fitting its chaotic climate: Storm. Upon closer examination, they found that this world was not one to simply catalog and forget. Beneath its churning clouds and dancing forks of lightning, an unusual alien species had evolved. With the limited time and resources available to this initial survey, it was impossible to say whether they were subsentient or had actually achieved full intelligence.

Recently, I have learned that the Rignumar explorers found something else. A friend of mine claims to have come across indications that ancient, crystalline ruins exist on Storm. However, some rumors state that much about that expedition was suppressed or even deleted from the Grid. —AM, CSS

Early in the Second Galactic War, a Rignumar survey team crossed space to visit the Loran system. That was 2348, over 150 years ago, and as follow-up mission to Loran has ever been mounted.

At first, this might seem to be very suspicious. Upon closer examination, however, it isn't all that unusual. The Verge is a large expanse, filled with a multitude of stars and the planetary systems that encircle them. As humanity moved outward from Old Space to explore these distant stars, they found many worlds with rich resources. With so many prizes to explore and exploit, a borderless system like Loran was easy to ignore.

Rignumar reports indicated that primitive aliens inhabited this world. It also suggested that crystalline ruins exist there that someone other than Storm's natives built. Their conclusion, however, was that these artifacts were not the relics of an advanced, Precursor species. Although a curiosity, these ruins have nothing that should attract the attention of humanity.

In different times, additional missions to Loran might have been funded. Archeologists might have sought out these alien structures and attempted to learn more about their mysterious builders. However, the demands of the Second Galactic War were far too great. If the Rignumar survey team had found anything even remotely valuable, they would have claimed the system. They did not, however, and no one else was willing to divert resources badly needed for the war effort to double-check their initial findings.

System Overview

The first planet in the Loran system is a vast, golden-ringed jovian named Salenancia. In addition to the satellite Storm, this planet is circled by a complex system of rings. Although currently at a distance of only 0.2 astronomical units from its primary, scientists believe that Salenancia formed further out in the system and has been slowly spiraling in toward the red dwarf star.

The strong gravitational pull of Salenancia distorts the shape of Storm, making the moon somewhat elliptical. This places a great tidal stress on the planet. The stress is only made worse by the presence of Talklora, a larger, but uninhabitable, moon further out from the gas giant. In essence, Storm is the rope in a gravitic game of tug of war, with both its neighbors pulling constantly on it. This has not only changed the shape of the Storm, but made it very active both meteorologically and tectonically.

Another source of turbulence on Storm is caused by the close proximity of the system's star and its effect on the atmosphere of Salenancia. Loran's stellar wind blasts away at Salenancia's upper atmosphere, literally blowing it away. Thus, the gas giant is losing atmosphere—hydrogen, mostly—which gets stripped of its electrons, becoming a very thin but very highly charged plasma. It forms an invisible plume, almost like a comet's tail, extending back and away from the star. Every four and a half days, Storm passes around behind Salenancia and goes through the tail.

Storm

Parent: Loran, M1-VI
Orbital Radius: 0.56
Orbital Period: 5.9 days
Rotation Period: 106 hours
Axial Tilt: Minimal (0°)
Diameter: 8,345 km
Density (Earth = 1): 0.56

Surface Gravity: 0.63 g
Atmosphere: N₂, O₂
Pressure: 0.67
Median Temperature: 13°
Satellites: 0
IRAPN: G1/R2/A2/P1/H2



The effect of this passage is truly awe-inspiring. Storm is already an electrical motor of a sort, circling Salamanca inside the gas giant's magnetosphere. Scientists estimate it is generating some hundreds of trillions of volts. All of those charged particles entering Storm's magnetic field result in a great deal of power being transferred from Salamanca to Storm.

This is energy influx is reflected in several ways, although the most obvious is an endless series of high altitude electrical discharges. These cause explosive reactions as the escaping hydrogen of Salamanca collects in the upper atmosphere and interacts with the moon's own oxygen. The result of a hydrogen-oxygen explosion like

this is the creation of water. Thus, the moon's atmosphere quickly accumulates clouds that bring with them torrential downpours.

Even as these rains seek to flood the planet, however, its volcanic activity is combining with other factors to strip the world of water through a rapid process of desiccation. In the end, however, the water wins. More fluid falls on Storm than dissipates and, in time, the planet may become a water world.

Like Salamanca, Storm is slowly spiraling in toward its primary. Every time it passes through the gas giant's tail, friction with that distended cloud slows the planet fractionally. In another million years or so, it will reach the gravitational Roche limit and be torn apart.



The natives of Storm are known simply as Stormies or Stormers. Presumably, they have a name for their own species, but it would sound to human ears like nothing more than a pulsing, throbbing cacophony of modulated hums.

Description: The average stormer stands just shy of 3 meters tall, clearly a product of the planet's light gravity. The actual body of the stormer is fragile and graceful-looking, reflecting in its willowy nature the light gravity of their homeworld.

A single tentacle rises from the creature's oddly-shaped, thick ridged head. This member adds half again to the stormer's height and moves in constant, agitated motion. As they walk, it whips, lashes back and forth, touching everything, as the creature is feeling its way.

Stormer skin is soft and rubbery, richly colored and smeared with mottled patches of black and dark green. The base of their tentacle is ringed by three, triangular mouths. They have no apparent eyes, ears, or other obvious sensory organs. Midway down the body, roughly halfway between the mouths and the tripod legs, is what appears to be a puffy ring of loose flesh.

Despite a frail appearance, the stormer's tripod stance allows them to stand resolutely with clear, firm balance. Their legs end in feet with long, curving claws. These are partially retractable and serve to anchor the stormer very solidly or provide traction when moving over rough terrain. When stormers walk, they do so with a rippling, fluid gait that is at once quick and yet unhurried.

In a most basic sense, stormers are herbivores. The nature of the flora on which they subsist makes this an uncertain classification at best. The stormers' food plants attract lightning strikes and store electrical energy in organic batteries. Using the electromagnetic sensors in their lateral lines, the stormers find the batteries, dig them up, and eat them.

It is worth noting that the so-called mouths located at the base of the creature's tentacle are not used for feeding. At the nexus of the three legs is a single cloaca that serves as both mouth and anus. Hidden away within this orifice is a prehensile tongue used as a feeding tentacle.

Little is known about the reproductive processes or practices of the stormers. It is believed that the single tongue serving all three mouths doubles as a sex organ. However, scientists have yet to determine whether or not these unusual creatures even practice sexual reproduction.

Encounter: The details surrounding the Rignunner expedition to Storm have been clouded in mystery and obscurity. Although several members of that expedition were killed, nothing in the records indicates that the natives were in any way hostile. Indeed, at least one of the deaths occurred because of a lightning strike. Even if the stormers did prove to be hostile, modern weapons would make

Stormer Game Data

STR 6	(d6+2)	INT 8	(d5+3)
DEX 8	(d6+3)	WIL 8	(d6+3)
CON 6	(d6+2)	PER 8	(d6+3)
Durability: 6/6/3/3			
Move: walk 12			
Reaction score: Marginal/L			
Action check: 3/4/2			
#Actions: 1			

Attacks

Whip	12/6/3	d4s/d8s/d12s	LI/0
Shock	12/6/3	d4s/d6s/d4w	En/0

Defenses

-1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 no INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 no WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 Armor: none (LI), none (H), d4 (En)

Skills

Movement [12], Stamina [14]-endurance [15], resist pain [16], Survival [14], Navigation [8]-surface [12], Awareness [12]-perception [14], Reactive [12]-physical [14], mental [14], Interaction [12].

Stormer Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class I

GRAPH: 61/R2/A2/P1/H2

Biozone: Plains (Lunar system)

Encounter Chance: Possible

Group Size: 3-18 (3d6)

Organization: Communal

Niche: Herbivore

Intelligence: Sentient





short work of even the most concentrated attack on their part.

With that stated, however, a number of important issues must be kept in mind by any would-be explorer of Storm.

The language of the stormers is difficult for human ears to hear and impossible to speak without mechanical translators. With the unaided ear, their language sounds like an extended series of bass hums and rumbles, paced with pulsings that remind most people of fingernails being slowly raked across a chalkboard. This disturbing concert of sounds is further interspersed with piercing chirps and shrill bursts. To those unfamiliar with this species, it sounds as if each creature is speaking in several voices.

A closer examination of the stormer language reveals that it covers a much broader range of sounds than any human tongue. At its lowest point, the language is well into the infrasonic range. Other sounds stretch well above the limits of human hearing into the ultrasonic frequencies. Without the use of an artificial language cracker or, perhaps, telepathic contact, human beings find it impossible to directly converse with stormers on more than the most rudimentary level.

Stormers are blind, lacking any manner of eye or other light sensitive organ. However, they possess their own very sophisticated means for observing the universe around them. The most prominent of these is sonar. The stormers send out pulses of sounds and read the echoes to build an image of the world around them. Exactly how clear or precise their perceptions are has yet to be established. Still, they most likely see right through human flesh, observing men and

women as collections of bone and "seeing" the dense equipment they carry.

A series of faint lines running from the knob of a head down the length of each leg marks stormers. These lateral lines are similar to those found on terrestrial sharks, and they allow the stormer to detect changes in atmospheric pressure. They might have enough sensitivity to allow the creature to feel the breathing of those near him or their movement through the air. Some evidence suggests that they can also sense the electromagnetic fields given off by natural and artificial sources.

Concealed beneath the folds of loose skin around the stormer's body is a collection of chemosensors. These allow the creature to detect smells and tastes in the air around them. It is also possible that they can "see" by constructing an "odor map" of the local area.

Habitat Society The initial contacts with stormers indicate that they have a very advanced society. Clearly, cooperation exists between individuals and some manner of communal duty is felt by all. Observers speculate how deep these emotions run.

Stormers may have some manner of religion, although the Rigunmor survey team could not verify this suspicion. However, religious belief or practice is so common among sentient species that it would be unwise to discard this assumption until the matter could be settled with certainty.



SPES

Many people think of *Spes* as a prehistoric version of humankind's own Earth. In a manner of speaking, this is true. Life evolved on *Spes* only recently (in cosmological terms). To date, only plants have evolved on *Spes*. What animal life exists there is wholly transplanted and was brought to the world by its human and alien colonists.

The population of *Spes* consists almost entirely of humans, with the Galactic Concord and Borealis Republic making up some 85% of this number. Among the alien species found on *Spes*, the mammo were are by far the most commonly encountered.

Of course, *Spes* is best remembered for the original Silver Bell colony, swept out of existence by the vicious *Klicks*. Rumors that these external horrors left behind more than a smoking crater and scattering of burned out buildings have spread. Stories abound of deadly predators left behind with no purpose other than to harass and kill anyone who might attempt to recolonize this planet.

Although no native animal life has evolved on *Spes*, it is not the tranquil, virgin world some imagine it to be. While no carnivorous plants grow on *Spes* (such flora would require animals for food), there are a number of species whose very nature makes them dangerous to human explorers.

The Plants of Spes

The plants of *Spes* are divided into several types. Most of these resemble those found on Earth and other Class I worlds, while a few others are more unusual.

Bryophyta

The oldest phylum of plants found on *Spes* are nonvascular growths similar to the liverworts, mosses, and hornworts found on Earth. These depend on direct contact with open or standing water and are abundant throughout the planet's wetlands. As the temperature on *Spes* continues to rise, these plants are more directly affected than their more advanced cousins.

Tracheophyta

These more advanced plants are faring somewhat better than the nonvascular fauna. Through their root systems and internal conduits, they can draw moisture and nutrients from some distance away. Examples of these plants include ferns, club mosses, horsetails, and other seed-bearing plants.

Spes

Parent: Hammer's Star, G5	Surface Gravity: 1.21 g
Orbital Radius: 0.88 AU	Atmosphere: N ₂ , O ₂
Orbital Period: 317.7 days	Pressure: 1.13 atm
Rotation Period: 18.06 hours	Median Temperature: 14° C
Axial Tilt: Moderate (14°)	Satellites: 2
Diameter: 11,840 km	GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/F3/H2
Density (Earth = 1): 1.21	

Photoveres

While all of the above plants are green, chlorophyll-users, an unusual development on *Spes* has resulted in the evolution of plants that directly nourish themselves from solar radiation. These include the more active and dangerous plants like ripper weed and mirror bluescums. Fewer than one hundred species of photoveres exist on the planet, although other plants of this type can be found on other worlds.

The scientific community still debates where to place photoveres. Certainly, they have a great deal in common with the vascular tracheophyta. However, their unusual method of sustaining themselves defies the normal classification of plants. Much as humans once considered fungi and algae to be plants and later reclassified them, the position of photoveric plants on the evolutionary tree remains somewhat in limbo.

Climatic Upheaval

Spes is also a world whose native plants are on the verge of utter extinction. In the wake of the External-engineered asteroid impact that annihilated the Silver Bell colony, this world is in the grip of a violent climatic change. As Concord and Borealis engineers fight to prevent the planet from slipping into a runaway greenhouse like Venus, existing species are vanishing at an alarming rate. Nowhere has humankind been witness to so rapid a mass extinction.

At the same time, these changes have caused a rapid increase in the number of mutations encountered by Concord and Borealis botanists. Thus, while extinctions are happening at a greatly accelerated rate, so too has the process of evolution sped up. In the end, no one can say whether the amazingly adaptive plants of *Spes* will change fast enough to survive on their new world.

Ripper Weed

Even the most rudimentary atlas of the Verge makes mention that animal life of any kind has never evolved on Spes. Explorers who take this to mean that the wilds of this verdant world are without menace are in for a big surprise, however. I've seen more than one body carried back to camp that looked as if it had run afoul of nothing less than an angry tiger. —AV, CSS

Ripper weed (also called lumberjack vine) is a large plant similar in many ways to the vines and creepers found on Earth. Unlike those plants, however, it can pose great danger to the unwary traveler.

Description. Ripper weed thrives among the undergrowth common in the scrub forests found across Spes. From a distance, it looks not only safe, but quite attractive. Only upon a closer examination does the truth about this deadly menace become clear.

At the heart of any ripper weed cluster is a large bulb roughly 30 centimeters in diameter. During the day, this opens to embrace the sunlight as a beautiful crystalline flower. Ripper weed does not sustain itself via photosynthesis as so many plants do. Instead, this blossom drinks in energy almost like a solar panel, making the plant a true photovore.

Because the ripper depends on direct exposure to sunlight, it has developed a means of felling trees that might obscure the rays of Hammer's Star. Eight long tendrils stretch out from the bulbous heart of the plant, each covered with rasplike bark. Whenever something throws its shadow over the central blossom, these vines lash out at

it. If the offending object is a tree or similar plant, it is quickly torn apart. Sadly, the same is often true of an unwary explorer.

Encounter. A typical encounter with a ripper weed plant begins when a traveler allows his or her shadow to fall across the flower. If the plant's flow of sunlight is disturbed for more than a minute, it employs its deadly tendrils to clear away the obstruction. As a rule, only four of these flailing members can reach any given character.

The plant can tell with uncanny precision where the object blocking its sunlight is standing. If an object obscures the entire bulb (perhaps by throwing a tarp over it), the plant lashes out violently with all of its tendrils. In this case, it is quite likely that the plant hits numerous targets.

Because of the nature of its attacks, the victims of a ripper are often caught unawares. A wary eye should notice not only the tell-tale flower at the heart of the plant, but also the lack of tall trees (or perhaps even the rotting remains of felled trees) around it.

An explorer who knows something of the ripper plant can approach it safely. At night, when the central flower is closed, the ripper is dormant. The same is true on extremely overcast days, when the sunlight is so diffuse that no shadows are cast.

Once the ripper has begun to attack, it continues until its precious sunlight is no longer obscured. If deprived of light for ten minutes, the plant closes up and goes dormant until light is restored to it.

Habitat/Society. Ripper weed plants are, in a manner of speaking, very territorial. They shun any plant that dares to grow too tall in their vicinity. They are primarily a danger only to those unfamiliar with them or those who happen upon them accidentally.

As the year draws to a close, the shortened days trigger a reproductive instinct in mature plants. This causes stringy filaments to form on the crystalline flower. When a stiff wind blows across the plant, these seed-strands are picked up and carried away. Depending on the velocity of the wind and the terrain around the plant, an individual seed strand may be carried as far as a mile from its parent plant.

Once the strand alights, it takes root and begins to develop a root system. By the time spring rolls around, the plant is ready to open its flower for the first time. It takes an average ripper weed plant nearly twenty-five Spes years to reach maturity.

Ripper Weed Ecological Data

Biotechnology: Series I

Environment: Class I

GRAFM: G2/R1/A2/F3/H2

Biome: Temperate forests

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 1

Organization: Solitary

Niche: Photovore

Intelligence: None

Ripper Weed Game Data

STR 6 (d6+3) **INT** 0

DEX 12 (2d6+4) **WIL** 0

CON 6 (d6+3) **PER** 0

Durability: 6/6/3/3

Action check: 6/3/1

Move: none

#Actions: 1

Reaction score: Marginal/1

Attacks

Whip (x3) 10/5/3 d4x/d4w/d6+1w 11/0

Defenses

—1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

—1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: none (LL), none (HL), none (En)

Skills

Unarmed Attack [10]



Moss

Near the bottom of the evolutionary ladder are the velvety mosses common to regions of Spes where standing water can be found. While most of these species are harmless, a few are worthy of mention in any complete study of the planet's ecosystem.

Carpet Moss The most common type of plants found on Spes is carpet moss. This hardy, emerald-green plant spreads rapidly and survives in almost any of the planet's climatic regions. Only on the poles or in alpine regions is carpet moss unknown.

The greatest hazard carpet moss presents is due to the high percentage of water in its composition. As many unlucky explorers can tell you, carpet moss is extremely slick. As such, physical actions (that is, actions using Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution-based skills) attempted while standing on a patch of carpet have a +1 step penalty. A Critical Failure indicates that the character has fallen. The exact effects of a fall depend on the situation, but a good rule of thumb is that any such fall inflicts at least d4-2s damage.

Fire Moss: The unpleasant plant known as fire moss exists in regions where a great deal of sulfur can be found. As such, it is common near geothermal vents and hot springs. Fire moss is a mottled green and orange color and feels rough to the touch. Like carpet moss, fire moss is slippery and imposes a +1 step penalty on physical actions attempted while standing on it.

The greatest danger presented by fire moss occurs when unprotected flesh makes contact with it. As a natural part of its growth process, it concentrates sulfur compounds, covering itself with a thin film of sulfuric acid. While this can discolor clothes and stain equipment, it raises painful blisters on exposed skin. The degree of contact (which is determined by attempting a Dexterity test check) determines how much damage the character suffers.

Check Result	Damage
Critical Failure	d4w
Failure	d8s
Ordinary	d6s
Good	d4s
Amazing	None

Skunk Moss. Skunk moss is a dark, glossy green moss marked with white, blisterlike spots. It exists most commonly in equatorial regions, but is occasionally encountered in temperate zones. Those who tread on it notice that it is every bit as slick as carpet moss.

The blisters that form in its spreading mass are compartments where the plant stores its waste in the form of a thick, oily gel. When something applies pressure to these compartments, they burst and throw droplets of foul-smelling fluid into the air. The fluid clings to flesh, fabric, or any other porous material. Anyone within 2 meters of someone splattered with this oil must succeed at a Constitution



test to avoid becoming ill. The Gamemaster may apply step modifiers to these checks for minimal or excessive contact.

Washing off the oil is a difficult process. As a rule, it requires between ten minutes to one hour to get off most of the small, depending on the degree of exposure.

Black Moss. Black moss is named not for its color, which is actually green with red capsules, but for its deadly nature. Unlike the other mosses, this moss can be walked across more or less normally. It thrives on coastal regions and does

not exist in fresh water wetlands.

When pressure is applied to them, the capsules pop and release a fine powder. While the capsule provides the means by which the plant reproduces itself, it also serves as a deadly menace to explorers. When this material contacts exposed flesh, it acts as a powerful neurotoxin. Gamemasters should treat the spores as a contact poison that imposes a +1 step penalty on the victim's Constitution test check. It has a 5-minute onset time and a duration of 30 minutes.

Check Result	Damage
Critical Failure	d6+1m
Failure	d4+1m
Ordinary	d8+1w
Good	d6+1w
Amazing	d6+1s

Yellow Moss: Yellow moss earned its name because of its yellow-green color. It is even more slippery than carpet moss, imposing a +2 step penalty on those who attempt physical actions while standing on it. This rare moss exists only on Bayle and Arinus islands, where it covers the coastline.

Apart from being slippery, yellow moss is not hazardous. Indeed, the reverse is true. Concord biochemists have recently become aware of the pharmaceutical potential of this plant. While no one is promising that yellow moss will spawn any so-called wonder drugs, early research has brought promising results.

Moss Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class I
ERAPK: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2
Homes: Temperate wetlands
Encounter Chance: Possible
Group Size: 2-16 (2d6)
Organization: Patch (d6+4 meters in diameter)
Niche: Nonvascular plant
Intelligence: None

MOSS



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Ravager

Ravager Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class I (and others?)
GRAFM: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2 (and others?)
Biome: Any surface or subsurface
Encounter Chance: Slim
Group Size: 1
Organization: Solitary
Niche: Carnivore
Intelligence: High-order animal

The media depicts the alien klicks as slaughtering insectoid monsters who hunger for human flesh. Such an inaccurate depiction might build up public confidence that the organized and well-equipped forces of the stellar nations could easily turn aside any invasion. Unfortunately, it also leads the common folk to underestimate the cunning minds of humankind's first real rivals in the galaxy.

It may be that there is no better example of the cool, calculating mind of the klick than the ravager. The klicks left behind these deadly creatures when the aliens attacked and destroyed the human colony of Silver Bell. Like biological time bombs, ravagers hibernate beneath the soil, waiting until some unknown event or condition causes them to awaken and do their terrible work.

Description Ravagers are insectoid beasts standing just under 3 meters in height. They are gaunt and angular, though they move with a fluid motion. The carapace that covers the ravager is jet black, and it is hard enough to turn away small arms fire with ease and dense enough to absorb a fair amount of energy weapon damage.

The ravager has three eyes evenly spaced around its mantislike head. These provide the creature with excellent vision throughout a full 360°; they make the ravager almost impossible to surprise. Beneath these eyes are a pair of terrible, rending mandibles strong enough to crush bones and bend steel.

Two of the creature's four arms are massive limbs ending in hooklike talons. A ravager employs these powerful weapons to rip its enemies apart. Its other pair of arms is frailer, ending in a trio of delicate fingers that allow the creature to manipulate objects.

Although these beasts do not possess true intelligence, they are cunning hunters and deadly predators. Their keen senses and natural instincts enable them to evaluate their prey and choose a tactic that emphasizes any obvious weaknesses.

Encounter Most people don't see a ravager before it attacks them. Further, because of the deadly nature of these creatures, few of their victims live long enough to identify their attackers.

When a ravager attacks, it does so fearlessly and with great cunning. It tries to slash at its target with its deadly talon-arms and then follows these two attacks with a crushing bite.

A ravager seldom breaks off its attack, even if it has suffered serious wounds. As it nears death, it may attempt to escape. Such retreats are only temporary, for as soon as the creature has nursed its wounds, it comes back to finish the job it started.

Habitat Society One can only imagine the nightmarish world on which the ravager evolved. In order for so fierce a creature to exist



Ravager Game Data

STR 16	(3d6+4)	INT 4	(Animal 7 or d4+4)
DEX 15	(3d6+4)	WIL 4	(d4+2)
CON 15	(3d6+4)	PER 4	(Animal 7 or d4+4)
Durability: 15/15/7/7		Action check: 9/4/2 ¹	
Moves: run 27		#Actions: 2	
Reaction score: Ordinary/2			
¹ -2 step action check bonus			

Attacks

Talons (x2)	16/8/4	d12e/d8w/d6m	LI/O
Bite	16/8/4	d4w/d8w/d6m	LI/O

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +3 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor: d6 (LI), d4 (HI), d4 (En)

Skills

Athletics [12]-climb [15], jump [15]; Unarmed Attack [12];
 Acrobatics [15]-dodge [18], fall [18]; Stealth [15]-hide [18];
 shadow [18]; sneak [18]; Stamina [15]-endurance [18], resist
 pain [18]; Awareness [15]-intuition [18]; perception [18].

without totally decimating the food chain, conditions must have been harsh. Perhaps the environment itself was so deadly that many ravagers fell victim to natural tusslers. On the other hand, there may have been creatures on the ravager homeworld so lethal as to actually prey on these killing machines.

To date, no intact ravager bodies have been recovered. Few have been killed, and those that have died suffer serious damage. Thus, no one has determined how ravagers reproduce. Presumably, they are sexual creatures, although none of the creatures encountered to date are females. It may be that only the males are adapted for combat.

Mortar Tree

Mortar Tree Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class I
GRAP:
G2/R1/A2/P3/H2
Biozone: Temperate forests
(Mabillon Continent)

Encounter Chance: Possible
Group Size: 1-4 (d4)
Organization: Solitary
Niche: Vascular plant
Intelligence: None

The mortar tree is an unusual form of plant found only on Spes's Mabillon Continent. Four times each year, at the change of the seasons, it responds to the natural urge to reproduce itself by firing off a volley of seeds. While an individual plant may present a hazard to the unwary, a patch of them can raze an entire village.

Description. Mortar trees are tall plants, similar in many respects to the evergreens and conifers of Earth. They can reach heights of 40 to 50 meters and are covered with a rough, raspy bark. The length of the trunk is dotted with narrow, flexible branches that stretch out to end in clusters of needles.

At the top of the tree is a tuft of bamboolike tubes that jut out in all directions. These are the seed throwers from which the plant draws its name.

Encounter. Although mortar trees are not an uncommon sight on Mabillon Continent, they are seldom found near human settlements. Over the cries of environmentalists, colony executives have stripped these plants from such areas to protect the citizenry.

As the mortar tree grows, baseball-sized seeds develop in the bamboolike tubes atop it. Behind these, a natural bladder fills with gas (mostly carbon dioxide), building up tremendous pressure. Four times a year, usually within a few days of the solstices and equinox, this pressure becomes so great that the bladder ruptures, propelling the seed out of the tube and into the air.

A full-grown plant can hurl seeds up to a mile away. The impact of a seed can be dangerous, especially as they often arrive at the same instant as the report of their launching. Anyone struck by a seed (a purely random event) suffers damage as indicated below.

The real hazard of a mortar tree attack comes not from the impact of the seed but from its aftermath.

If the seed strikes a hard surface, it cracks open and throws out a splash of thick, gelatinous material. Upon contact with the air, this slime heats rapidly and bursts into flame.

This fire serves two purposes. First, it burns out an area around the impact point, destroying any plants that might compete with the seedling for nutrients and sunlight. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the flames roast the seed itself. This heating is an important part in the germination process. A mortar tree seed that has not been cooked in this fashion does not sprout.

Mortar Tree Damage					
Event	CF	F	D	G	A
Hit by seed	d4w	d6s	d6s	d4s	none
Flaming sap	d6w	d6-1w	d4w	d4-1w	d4s

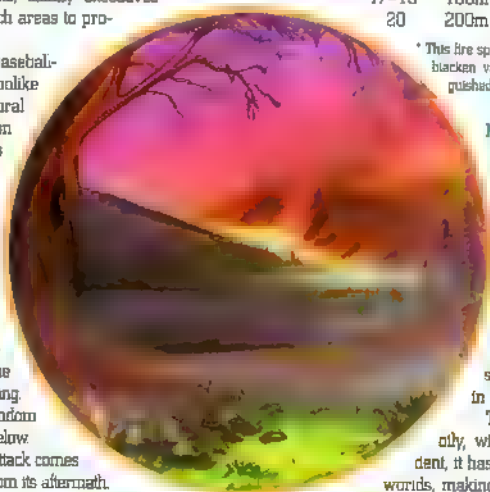
The chances that a fire spreads from this impact vary with the conditions present at the time. Mortar tree fires tend to burn themselves out quickly, but they have been known to spread and become major infernos. The following table determines the final extent of a fire that is not dealt with.

d20	Woodland Conditions		
Roll	Wet	Normal	Dry
1-4	1m	10m	20m
5-8	10m	20m	50m
9-12	20m	50m	100m
13-16	50m	100m	200m
17-19	100m	200m	*
20	200m	*	*

* This fire spreads until it becomes a major forest fire. It can blacken vast tracts of land if not confronted and extinguished.

Habitat Society: The mortar tree is a fascinating example of flora adapting to survive in a highly competitive ecosystem. Sadly, these plants are suffering greatly from the ecological changes on Spes. For some reason, the increasing temperature has proven very difficult for them to adapt to. A survey of these trees conducted in 2501 indicated that their growth had come to a virtual standstill. How long they can survive in this condition is anyone's guess.

The sap of the mortar tree is thick and oily, with a pleasant aroma. Quite by accident, it has been found to repel insects on many worlds, making it a popular item with outdoorsmen.



throughout the Verge. In addition, when mixed with the finest bit of fuel, it burns readily and is frequently used by forest rangers or ex-

perienced woodsmen for starting campfires. It can be fermented as well, making a bitter ale that some find palatable.

Grabber Grass

On many worlds, plants have evolved specialized means of capturing and devouring creatures. Perhaps the most well known examples of such flora are the Venus fly-trap and pitcher plant, although the giant spider vines of Epsilon Eridani are far more dangerous.

Spes, lacking any native animal life, has never evolved carnivorous plants. It has, however, developed a few species who find it easier to steal nourishment from their neighbors instead of wasting their own time photosynthesizing it. Grabber grass is an excellent example of such plants.

Description: Grabber grass grows clusters ranging between 1 meter and 2 meters in diameter. From a distance it looks very much like a cluster of greenish-white palm fronds.

At the heart of the plant is a round trunk of about 30 centimeters in diameter. The trunk is covered to a depth of about 2 centimeters with a thick, gelatinous sap not unlike that found in terrestrial pine trees.

Hidden beneath the fronds are a trio of flexible, vine-like extremities that normally lie coiled and waiting. When unturbed, these can stretch as far as 10 meters from the main body of the plant. The same thick, sticky sap that surrounds the trunk also coats these vines. Items picked up by the plant over the years dot the plant's heart, since they are often grabbed by the plant (see below) in the mistaken belief that it was something edible. From time to time, those curious enough to look can find valuable things in this way.

The grabber grass plant is anchored to the ground by three thick roots. These provide the creature with only a minimal amount of actual nourishment, serving primarily to hold it in place. From time to time, when food becomes scarce, the roots shrivel and the top of the plant breaks loose. When this happens, the frond-like leaves of the grabber grass catch the wind and it rolls away. When it comes to rest, the plant sprouts a trio of roots to secure the plant in its new home.

Encounter: Through some means that remains unknown to botanists on Spes, grabber grass can sense the presence of other plants—especially those that bear fruit. Indeed, one can encounter grabber grass only in the presence of such flora.

When the plant needs nourishment, it shoots out one of its tendrils in much the same way that a frog or chameleon attacks a fly.



The sap on the surface of the vine bonds almost instantly with the fruit of the target plant. When the tendril snaps back, it pulls the fruit with it. As soon as the food strikes the trunk, it becomes trapped in the sap coating there. Over the course of the next day, the fruit becomes encased like a fly in amber. In time, the plant digests the food and absorbs its nutrients.

Although the so-called attack of a grabber grass plant inflicts no damage, it can be quite annoying. Despite their keen ability to strike at potential food sources, they have made mistakes. In the past, they have snatched hats from heads, jerked guns out of hands, or otherwise stolen from the unwary. If someone is holding an object in his or her hands, she or he may attempt a Strength feat check to hold onto it. Unless the explorer knows that she or he may encounter grabber grass, this check is made with a +3 step penalty.

Cleaning such items and returning them to serviceability varies in difficulty with the nature of the item. Things with many exposed, moving parts may need to have a commercial treatment in an ultrasonic solvent bath (at a cost of about \$50). Other items can be cleaned by hand, although this takes some time (2d6x10 minutes).

Habitat Society: Several species of grabber grass exist on Spes, and they live primarily in temperate regions of light forest. Although not dangerous, they are among the most annoying plants one can find in the Verge. Gamemasters can use these plants to introduce a lighthearted moment into an otherwise serious adventure. Of course, while the players are paying attention to these creatures, something far more dangerous might come along.

When a grabber grass exhausts the local food supply, it breaks free of its root structure and rolls away like a tumbleweed. In time, these roots sprout another grabber grass plant. If the local plants have again begun to bear fruit, it picks up where its predecessor left off.

Grabber Grass Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class I

IRAPK: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Biome: Temperate forests

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 1

Organization: Solitary

Niche: Herbivorous plant

Intelligence: None

THE LIGHTNING NEBULA

Despite its picturesque name, the Lightning Nebula is not home to the impressive, if impossible, cosmic storms so common to the holodramas of 26th century studies. When this supernova remnant was first discovered in the 23rd century, it gained its name because of the unusual blue-white streaks that scar its dark, ruddy expanse.

Structure

The glow of the Lightning Nebula finds its source in a number of stellar phenomena. The most prominent factor is the collision of stars in the clouds of expanding gas. The friction produced by these endless impacts creates a hazy, red glow. In addition, the energy liberated by these restless storms causes certain elements to fluoresce brightly. The third element illuminating the nebula falls among the most basic optical characteristics known to humanity. Light from various nearby stars reflects off of massive, but almost ethereal, filaments of star stuff. This mechanism provides the blue streaks by which the nebula was named.

Astronomers believe that the powerful explosion of a large, unstable star in Earth's late 1900s created the Lightning Nebula. It glows brightly in the night sky of every planet in the Verge, clearly visible against the black vastness of space. From the worlds of the Hammer's Star system, it gleams so radiantly that most of the minor stars are swept from the sky by its glare.

LN-1

At the heart of the Lightning Nebula is a rapidly rotating neutron star, the corpse of the star whose violent death produced this beautiful cosmic cloud. Astronomers long ago dubbed this 10-kilometer fragment LN-1, an unimaginative name that has stuck with it throughout the centuries. Remote probes deployed to investigate LN-1 found a magnetic field with a strength of about 100 million tesla (roughly one million million times that of Aegle or Sol). LN-1 rotates some 270 times per second and has a surface temperature of more than one million degrees.

Like all young neutron stars, LN-1 is shedding neutrons at a rapid rate as it cools toward the more or less stable one million degree mark. This and other characteristics of the star disrupt many attempts to study space beyond the Lightning Nebula, effectively masking many of the telltale indications by

The Lightning Nebula

Parent: LN-1
Orbital Radius: n/a
Orbital Period: n/a
Rotation Period: n/a
Axial Tilt: n/a
Diameter: 43 light-years
GRAPH: GD/R4/AD/PO/HO

Density: n/a
Surface Gravity: n/a
Atmosphere: None
Pressure: Vacuum
Median Temperature: -100°C
Satellites: None

which humanity could study the suspected realm of the Externals who destroyed the Silver Hall colony at Hammer's Star.

History

The first human exploration of the Lightning Nebula occurred in the latter years of the 25th century, when the Galactic Concord scout vessel *Cranston* left behind the explored systems of the Verge and entered the stellar remnant. While the composition of the nebula exactly what *Cranston's* commander had expected to find, a number of anomalies captured his attention. The most striking of these, especially since the Lightning Nebula was still very young, was the presence of numerous Class-VII lifeforms.

Numerous theories have emerged to explain the presence of these creatures, which have obviously not had time to evolve within the nebula. To date, the most accepted one states that the presently visible mass of the Lightning Nebula has engulfed a smaller, darker nebula previously unknown to humanity. The lifeforms now found in the Lightning Nebula originated in that older, less energetic realm and have spread to fill the extents of their new environment. Since no LN-2 exists, though, a shadow of doubt weakens this theory. Of course, a second neutron star is not necessary for the existence of an older nebula, but its absence is at least worth noting.

Some speculate that one or more of the unknown species known to exist in the darkness beyond the Verge transplanted the creatures found in the Lightning Nebula there. While this may be true, no one can offer a good reason why the alien species should have done this.

On the latter note, at least one of the lifeforms encountered within the extents of the Lightning Nebula was encountered there wholly by accident. The so-called star pods are senescent wanderers who just happened to be passing through.

THE LIGHTNING NEBULA LN-1



Soap Bubble

Many scientists compare the soap bubbles of the Lightning Nebula with the DiAgosto clouds of the Möbius Belt to the Endomar system. In many ways, these creatures might be cousins, although dozens of light-years separate them.

Description: Unlike the irregular DiAgosto clouds, soap bubbles are, as their name implies, gossamer spheres of almost invisible organic matter. They drift through the silent vacuum of the Lightning Nebula, carried on the unseen and almost ethereal winds of stellar particles. More often than not, a soap bubble is invisible when viewed against the backdrop of the nebula. From time to time, a glimmer of starlight endows it with a shimmering nimbus of bright colors.

Encounter: Soap bubbles lack any real intelligence. They are creatures of instinct, reacting according to the same basic needs all other living things have. They are most commonly encountered when acting on these basic impulses.

Soap bubbles can sense light, heat, and other electromagnetic radiation. They are drawn to things that emit heat and light the way a terrestrial moth is drawn to a flame. When they detect a strong source of these emissions, they alter their shape slightly, usually by forming dimples and distending themselves, so that the bombardment of interstellar particles guides them toward this potential source of food.

For the most part, these creatures sustain themselves by filtering out carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen from the nebula. Soap bubbles absorb these nutrients directly into their membranous bodies in a process that provides them with the nutrients they need to sustain itself.

From time to time, space bubbles encounter larger objects, such as drifting asteroids or spacecraft. When these encounters occur at a very high relative speed, the object tears the soap bubble apart. In these cases, the larger fragments shape themselves into new, smaller bubbles. This is an unusual means of reproduction, to be sure, but it works for the soap bubble. Any attack made against a soap bubble has a similar effect.

When the bubble encounters an object at very low relative velocities, it engulfs it much like a terrestrial amoeba. It then alters its shape to focus the light of nearby stars onto the object. Unless the soap bubble is encountered near a star, this poses no threat to a modern starship. As this process gradually heats asteroids, they begin to give off the elements soap bubbles live on just as comets do when they near a star.

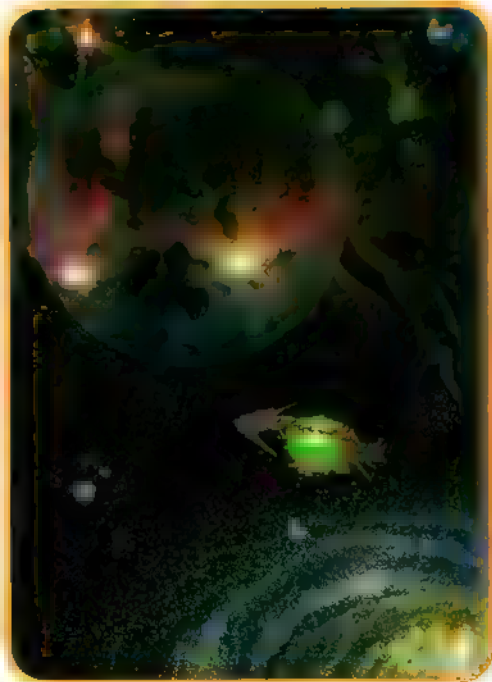
If the soap bubble is near a star, this process can become dangerous to spacelancers or even spacecraft. The chart below indicates the damage potential of the space bubble based on its position relative to nearby stars. The creature makes one "attack" per hour against every object inside it.

Escaping from the confines of a soap bubble is not difficult. One need only activate the ship's engines and race to freedom, rupturing the bubble in the process. Even an individual with a small maneuvering pack can generate enough velocity to break free of the creature's tenacious grasp.

Habitat/Society: Soap bubbles are solitary creatures, lacking any real intelligence. They act in the same ways as single-celled animals or similar lifeforms, depending on basic instincts to survive. Soap bubbles are dangerous only to the unwary but are splendid creatures well worth observing.

Soap Bubble Damage Table

Star Type	Damage per Hour by Position in System		
	Outer	Habitable	Inner
O or B	d4s	d6w	d8m
A or F	nil	d4w	d6m
G or K	nil	nil	d4m
M	nil	nil	nil



Soap Bubble Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series VII

Environment: Class 4

GRAPH: 60/R4/AD/PO/HO

Hisms: Nebula

Encounter Chance: Possible

Group Size: 1

Organization: Solitary

Niche: Filter feeder

Intelligence: None

Streamer

Named for the glistening filaments that connect the small, meteoroidlike creatures, streamers feed directly on the energy released by fluorescing gasses within the Lightning Nebula.

Description. Physically, streamers look rather like 2-meter long, egg-shaped fragments of rock. Even at close range, they might be mistaken for meteoroids if not for their smooth, polished surfaces. A closer examination of these unusual creatures reveals that they resemble organic capacitors. Their bodies are essentially living storage batteries and they survive only for as long as they remain "charged."

A streamer must be connected to at least one other of its kind to feed. Because of this, streamers are always encountered in swarms of at least six individuals. An average swarm comprises between eighteen and twenty individuals. Each of these creatures connects itself to several of its counterparts with thin filaments of highly conductive fibers. As these filaments pass through the charged gases and fluorescing vapors of the nebular medium, they shunt energy into the body of the creature.

When a streamer reaches a high enough energy level, it can reproduce. It does this by cracking into three nearly identical parts, each of which is a fully mature, yet smaller, streamer. The resulting trio of creatures grows by absorbing organic compounds from the tenuous clouds of the nebula.

Streamers use a small release of their stored energy to ionize the rarefied particles of the nebular medium behind them. This natural ion engine allows them to accelerate very slowly (approximately 1 meter per phase per phase, or 1/30 of a G) through the void.

Encounter. Streamers move through the Lightning Nebula with their filaments soaking in the ambient energy around them. They are not aggressive; they ignore starships or characters that come near them.

All of the energy absorbed by a swarm of streamers is distributed more or less evenly among its members. If the swarm finds itself subjected to an exceptionally powerful charge (as it is when energy weapons are directed them), these organic capacitors overload and tear apart in powerful explosions. The damage inflicted by such an explosion equals that initially dealt to the streamers. However, it is reduced by one damage level. Thus, an Amazing energy attack becomes a Good energy attack and a Good attack becomes Ordinary. No attack is ever downgraded below Ordinary.

Creatures that touch a streamer or one of the filaments experience a powerful electrical charge if they are not fully insulated from the creature. Apart from this, however, streamers are not dangerous. They cannot directly attack anyone and cannot control the natural shocks they release.

Habitat/Society. Streamers possess no real intelligence. They move about, heading in one direction or another for no reason that anyone can fathom.

Streamer Ecological Data

Blacksmithy: Series VII
Environment: Class 4
GRAPH: G0/R4/A0/PO/H0
Home: Nebula
Encounter Chance: Possible
Energy Size: G-36 (d6G)
Organization: Swarm
Niche: Filter feeder
Intelligence: None

Streamer Game Data

STR 0	INT 0	
DEX 0	WIL 0	
CON 19 (d6+10)	PER 0	
Durability: 19/19/9/9		Action check: n/a
Move: none		#Actions: 1
Reaction score: n/a		

Attacks			
Energy arc	12/6/3	d8s/d8w/d12w	En/G
Explosion	n/a*	d6+1w/d6+1w/d8s	En/G

Defenses
 no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor: d12 (LI), d8 (HI), d4 (En)

Skills
 None
 * Explosions occur only when the streamer is attacked by energy weapons. See the Encounter section for further information.



Star Pod

The crew of the independent scout *Starfarer* discovered star pods in October of 2497. Although the pods were first believed to be another of the Lightning Nebula's unusual lifeforms, explorers soon discovered that star pods are nomadic wanderers, spreading themselves throughout the cosmos.

Description: Star pods fall into the same category as plants, although they stretch the definition of that term to its limits. To fully describe the star pod, one must understand its fascinating life cycle.

Seeds: Star pods begin (and some might say end) their lives as teardrop-shaped seeds roughly 45 centimeters long and 30 centimeters across. The black husks encasing these seeds are tough enough to survive both the fiery inferno of an atmospheric reentry and the jarring impact of a hard landing. The seeds of star pod plants drift through space for several centuries while remaining vital and able to grow when they finally make planetary.

Seedlings: When a star pod seed strikes the surface of a planet, the impact buries it deep beneath the surface. As it cools, roots gradually spread outward from it, taking in vital nutrients

from nearby soil. Star pods thrive on Class 1 or 2 worlds, and grow only rarely on Class 3 worlds. Their seeds cannot grow in Class 4 or 5 environments, although mature plants can move freely through the void of space. As the plant grows, it might be mistaken for mundane vegetation (unless such life is not present on the world, of course). Each seed gives birth to a patch of as many as two dozen plants. These plants sprout several hundred yards apart and are connected back to the original seed by a long, fibrous tendril referred to, inaccurately, as a fuse.

Tree: The star pod's planetbound stage ends only after it reaches the dimensions of a terrestrial redwood. Standing some 130 meters tall, these asparagus-shaped plants often tower over the local flora. Under ideal conditions, a star pod grows from seed to tree in a little over a century. Especially fertile soil may hasten its development.

Despite their safe, imposing appearance, star pod trees can be deadly for they are, in reality, massive solid fuel rockets. When a tree reaches its full height, an internal chemical reaction at its base triggers the natural propellant within it. Unleashing a tremendous jet of flame and heat, this natural rocket hurtles skyward, snapping the bonds of gravity and sailing into the depths of space. A mature star pod can achieve escape velocity on planets with a surface gravity of up to 2.5 G. If they have taken root on more massive worlds, they end their lives by crashing back down to the surface.

A star pod tree can ignite before it has reached maturity. Lightning can bring about early ignition, as can careless laser fire. This can be disastrous, for the structure of the plant cannot contain the explosive reaction within it. When this happens, the plant explodes violently. The Star Pod Explosion Table indicates the effects of these blasts. It is also important to remember that the explosion of one tree can cause a chain reaction, setting off others or, perhaps, the entire patch. Should a tree suffer a point of any type of damage, it is possible that it detonates (1 in 20 chance). Each additional point of damage raises the chance of detonation by one point. Thus, a hit that causes 5 points of stun damage explodes on a roll of 1-5 on a d20.

Sail Pod: The majority of the tree's mass is burned away during its ascent. In the end, only the top 30 meters or so survives to

Star Pod Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series VII

Environment: Class 1-4

SHAP: G0-G3/R0-R5/A0-A3/P0-P4/H0-H4

Moves: Varies

Encounter Chance: Slim

Growth Time: 1 or 2d12

Organization: Solitary or Patch

Niche: Plant

Intelligence: None

StarPod Game Data

STR 0

DEX 0

CON 25

Duration: 25/25/12/12

Moves: none

Reaction score: n/a

INT 0

WIL 0

FEAR 0

Action check: n/a

#Actions: 0

Attacks:

None

Defenses:

no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: d8 (L), d8 (H), d4 (En)

Skills:

Unarmed Attack (10).

In seed pod or seed pod form only. As trees, the durability of a star pod is based on 1 stun point per 3 meters of height. Thus, a 100-meter tree has a durability of 33/33/12. Energy attacks on a star pod tree may cause it to explode.



Star Pod Tree Explosions Table

Size of Tree	Amazing Blast	Damage	Good Blast	Damage	Ordinary Blast	Damage
20 meters	out to 10m	d8m	11 20m	d6w	21 40m	d4s
40 meters	out to 20m	2d8m	21-40m	2d6w	41-80m	2d4s
60 meters	out to 30m	3d8m	31 60m	3d6w	61 120m	3d4s
80 meters	out to 40m	4d8m	41 80m	4d6w	81 160m	4d4s
100 meters	out to 50m	5d8m	51 100m	5d6w	101m 200m	5d4s
120 meters	out to 60m	6d8m	61-120m	6d6w	121m-240m	6d4s

enter space. The bulbous nose of this remnant is a pod filled with about two dozen slowly maturing seeds. Over the course of the next several weeks, the outer surface of the remaining trunk opens like the petals of a flower to reveal a gleaming underside. As sunlight falls upon this mirrored parasol, the pod puts it to use in two ways. First, it feeds on the solar energy rather like a terrestrial plant, metabolizing some of its own nutrient reserves in a process similar to photosynthesis. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it rides this photon bombardment like a primitive solar sail. With this gradual thrust behind it, the star pod sets off for a nearby system.

Almost without fail, the instincts of the sail pod cause it to turn toward an F, G, or K-class star. Perhaps this is indicative of the system where these plants first evolved. On the other hand, this might be an evolutionary trait. Since these stars are more likely to have earthlike worlds, star pods that seek them out possess higher chances of surviving and reproducing.

Seed Pod: The final stage of the star pod's life occurs as it nears the star system toward which it has traveled for untold years, decades, or even centuries. As the heat of the new star system begins to warm the pod, the seeds in its bow gradually develop. At the same time, the solar sail shrivels and dies, breaking off in tiny fragments.

Finally, as the pod nears the inner system, solar heating causes it to swell and burst. When this happens, some two dozen seeds are thrown into space. These drift in long orbits until they find their way to a planet. Once there, with luck, they find the nutrients they need to take root and begin the process again.

Encounter: Adventurers can encounter star pods as trees on planetary surfaces. At such times, they might not realize the potential danger of these organic solid fuel rockets. If some manner of combat ensues, players could learn the scope of their ignorance amid a thunderous roar and searing ball of fire.

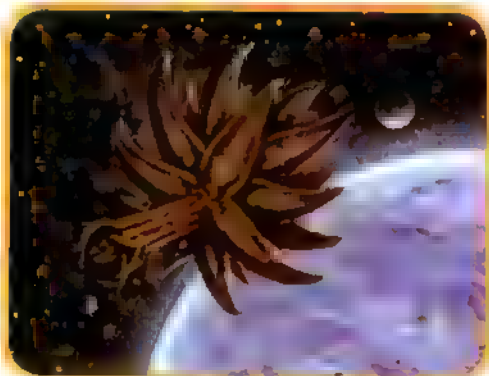
In space, adventurers can encounter a star pod in its sail pod form. As such, they might mistake it for a primitive starship heading out on the first leg of a long, slower-than-light journey. Only when characters move closer to the pod will they discover its true nature.

Shortly after their discovery in the Lightning Nebula, determined explorers located other star pods in and around the systems

of the Verge. To date, however, fewer than fifty star pods or star tree patches have been discovered.

As if the star pods were not already unique enough, they contain high levels of iridium. Theories state that they concentrate this element as a normal part of their growth process. Some consideration has been given to the idea of mining or harvesting star pods to recover this priceless resource. This has brought outcries from environmental groups who point out, quite rightly, that no one knows how prolific star pods are. If they have reached the brink of extinction, any such activity would almost certainly doom the species to destruction.

Habitat Society: As unintelligent plants, star pods lack any organized social structure. In space, they are solitary wanderers, moving from one star system to another as they seek to spread themselves to all corners of the galaxy. How long ago the first star pod leapt into space, no one knows. It may be that they are only newly evolved (in cosmic terms) and their home planet is not too far removed from the Verge. However, they might have also begun on the far side of the galaxy and are only now finding their way into its last corners. Indeed, no one has reason to believe that these unusual plants are even native to our galaxy.



STARS
AND
PLANETS



Mote Swarm

While the other creatures described in this entry can be dangerous, they are primarily curiosities. If explorers use care and know what they are doing, they can study the creatures quite safely, even at close range. The same does not hold true of the mote swarm, however. These dangerous creatures can destroy even a heavily armed and armored warship.

Description: Mote swarms are vast clouds, sometimes hundreds of kilometers across, composed of tiny particles not much larger than a grain of rice. Despite their size, mote swarms are diffuse and very difficult to detect. When drifting through the nebular medium, a swarm seldom has more than one mote per 10 cubic meters of space.

Individually, a mote is a small, rounded creature with a crystalline structure. When examined with the proper equipment, it becomes clear that a small but powerful magnetic field surrounds the mote. Although apparently harmless, this field makes the mote swarm dangerous to unwary travelers.

Encounter: A starship most commonly encounters a mote swarm when the ship slows to a halt to examine some unusual phenomenon. The presence of the mote swarm often goes unnoticed until the creatures have begun to do their insidious work.

When any large metallic object, such as a spacecraft, nears a mote, the creature's natural magnetic field fastens the two together. Immediately afterward, the mote's magnetic field intensifies. This causes all of the other moles in the area to gravitate toward the object. As they attach themselves, the process is repeated, drawing an ever-increasing number of moles to the area.

At the same time, the mote begins to break down the object to which it attaches itself. Exactly how the moles do this is unknown, but the creatures apparently disrupt the basic nuclear forces that hold matter together at the atomic level. As they force the object to decay, they absorb the liberated electrons and other particles on which the moles feed.

Depending on the number of moles in the area, it can take some time for a ship's crew to notice this process of decay. The first attack made by the mote swarm occurs 6-36 (6d6) hours after the ship first encounters the swarm. The time before the next attack is determined by halving the time before the previous attack. Thus, if the first attack occurs after 24 hours, the second comes 12 hours later, the third 6 hours after that, and so on. The shortest interval between attacks is 1 hour.



The first attack made by the moles degrades the ship's armor. For example, heavy armor is reduced to moderate armor and moderate armor becomes light armor. Light armor is destroyed, leaving the ship with no protection. After the ship's armor is destroyed, it suffers damage just as if another spacecraft had attacked it (roll randomly to determine which compartment is affected). This damage begins as a d4 points of stun damage, then becomes a d4 points of wound damage, and finally d4 points of mortal damage (at which point the damage is constant until the moles or the ship are destroyed).

The presence of the moles might go undetected for some time. As a rule, the Gamemaster should allow characters to attempt a System Operation—sensors skill check after each attack to discover the reason for the damage. To correctly identify the source of the problem, a successful skill check with a +2 step penalty is required. A cumulative -1 step bonus is allowed for each check after the first.

Ridding an infected starship of the moles is a simple matter once the crew understands what is happening. Since the moles depend on a magnetic field to remain in contact with the ship, the heroes need only juryrig a system that allows them to match this field with one of their own. If such a system is employed, the moles are flung into space. The Gamemaster should determine the difficulty of designing and activating such a field based on the resources at hand and the planning of the players on behalf of their heroes.

Mote Swarm Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series VII

Environment: Class 4

SRPM: GQ/R4/AQ/PO/HD

Home: Nebula

Encounter Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: Tens of thousands

Organization: Swarm

Niche: Parasite

Intelligence: None

APPENDIX ONE: THE MEDURR

This report is Eyes-Only Zeta-Level Confidential and available only to key figures among the upper echelons of the Concord Administrators, the CSS, the Solar Union's military based in the Lucullus system, and various diplomats among Rigunner and Orin representatives in the Verga.

The medurr, a species new to humans, have made themselves known only to a select few diplomats. Despite unfortunate circumstances at first contact, they have begun negotiations with the Concord to form an alliance. With the battles against the Externals increasing, their presence in the Verga and their role as potential allies may be a secret for only a short time longer.

Often belligerent and confrontational, these "dragons" strike immediate chords as creatures to fear, and more information on them calms folk only slightly. Medurr are seaurians originating from space between and "west" of both Old Space and the Verga, perhaps coming from as far away as another galactic arm. They are a massive species, standing erect at 2.5 meters when upright and often measuring 5 meters or more from nose to tail. They have immense claws on their six limbs, teeth akin to Earth's crocodiles, and a dorsal ridge along the head that varies in size and sharpness. Also varying across the omnipresent species is their armored hide, which ranges from thick heavy scales to a nearly snakelike skin with heavier pigmentation.

Roleplaying

First impressions sometimes tell many truths, and that applies to the medurr. Their armored hide, claws, and teeth alone reveal them for what they are—a race of warriors. However, unlike the weren, their codes of conduct respect only strength and might, rather than any abstract honor code or noble etiquette. While some might assume the medurr are simply reptilian bullies, the medurr exhibit strong intellects and think in terms of battle in all things. Their conversations often become verbal sparring matches. They are incredible tacticians and actively seek to understand ally and enemy technologies to better plan tactics to aid allies or combat enemies as soon as possible.

Medurr see life simply. They believe that power exists to make one strong, and the strong rule the weak. Their culture embraces ideals of power by any means, making them a race of Machiavellians, for lack of a closer human archetype. Medurr constantly seek to prove themselves the strongest, fastest, or most agile, and they easily take offense when anyone bests them physically. A medurr often challenges folk to contests of strength or stamina. Once beaten, medurr either respect their vanquishers or work toward their deaths.

Many assume that the medurr speak with sibilant hisses, like snakes, but linguists easily understand their strong, guttural language of growls, barks, hisses, and tail movements. Speaking it is tougher, given human inability to produce the requisite tail movements. As with many of the other alien species, their language reveals much of their mindset. When first contact ambassadors stated, "We are friendly and want peace between the species," the medurr laughed—a deep-throated growl accentuated by tail thumping. When asked, the medurr explained that they translated it to mean that the Vergers would not attack and that they had politely asked not to be eaten. Medurr have no fewer than seventeen words for

types of personal combat, fourteen for ranged or mass combat, and thirty-one for types of mechanized or vehicular combat, whether aerial or spacial. The words for weaponry number in the hundreds. Also revealing is that they have no words for "friend," "acquaintance," "partner," or "employee." They recognize such concepts as family member, males (but not in a marital sense), battle-ally, and slave, but their species's enmity toward anyone outside of their matriarchal clan (including other medurr) prevents them from bonding to anyone as a "friend." The closest anyone might bond with a medurr is to be adopted into his or her clan by a sharing of blood, which occurs only if said outsider saves a female medurr from imminent death.

Given the general brutality and arrogance of the medurr and their superior transport technologies, the tense negotiations with Vergers almost broke down as they saw little reason to respect humans or the other known species aside from some superior weapons. When talks tentatively broached the topic of the kroath, n'sse, and clicks as other alien species the Vergers knew little about, all the medurr reacted violently. The diplomats feared for their lives until they made it clear that they too were enemies of



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the Externals. While an alliance remains tentative, the medurr ambassador Stykor of Clan Vys stated her people's position clearly "The enemy of our enemy is our ally." As of yet, the medurr have not shared more intelligence on the I'kri threat, though talks continue on Aegis and Cambria II.

Medurr consist almost entirely of Combat Specs, as this warlike species sees fit to glorify little else. A few Free Agents live among the *khahn* medurr (see "The Master Race" for more information about medurr subspecies). Rarest are the Diplomats, who always consist of females who lead all of their children. Very few Tech Ops exist among the medurr, as most of them leave that task to their servitors. Finally, absolutely no medurr are Mindwalkers.

All medurr have the following special abilities, with exceptions and modifications described within the text below.

Superior Durability: Like the weren, medurr have a fantastic ability to withstand pain and punishment. When determining durability ratings, use the medurr's Constitution score $\times 1.5$ (rounding down when necessary).

Body Armor: All medurr have natural armor that provides d6 (LI), d4+1 (HI), and d4 (En) protection against attacks.

Claws and Teeth: While all medurr have vestigial claws on their four-fingered hands (three fingers, opposable thumb), some medurr (the *khahn*) have far sharper claws that deal damage. When a *khahn* medurr attacks with an Unarmed Attack check, the claws deal damage of $d8s/d4+2w/d4-1m$ (LI/O) plus Strength bonuses as needed. All medurr can use their teeth in a bite attack that causes damage of $d4+2w/d6w/2d4w$ (LI/O).

Psionic Resistance: The medurr, for some unknown reason, produce no psionic-positive offspring, either talents or full mindwalkers. While they are not immune to psionics, any psionic attacks or effects suffer a +2 step penalty when used against the mind of a medurr.

Noncombat Penalties: Medurr suffer a +1 step penalty when using any skills that are not Combat Spec profession skills. Their culture provides them with the ability to do other things than fight, but most often, they leave such tasks to others, for the medurr believe that they are born to fight.

Medurr in Other Campaigns

The medurr are aliens exclusive to the STAR*DRIVE campaign world, thus placing them squarely in a far-future campaign. While



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their exact role in the Verga has yet to be fully determined, they have temporarily allied themselves with humanity's war against the Externals. Their role in your campaigns could be wholly different, though.

Placed in a contemporary or near-future campaign, the medurr could easily become great enemies. As an enslaving species, medurr represent perfect alien invaders out to conquer humanity. Given the many theories of multiple alien invaders, imagine if the fraal come into contact with humanity earlier thanks to attacks on their extraplanetary bases by medurr.

Far future campaigns suit the medurr the best, since their tactics take them from world to world, conquering all that they encounter. Medurr make fantastic villains for any future situation, whether heroes want to explore the stars and find their colony under attack or find themselves in a trading alliance with those whose planet suddenly falls to the medurr.

Medurr Society

Circumstances limit humanity's exposure to medurr society. The few glimpses of the medurr way of life consist of shipboard contact and what they choose to tell of one lone colony in a long-quarantined system. The result is a view of their society no more accurate than how life on a capital ship describes humanity in the

Stellar Ring. Still, what the Vergers have learned through the medurr diplomat Stykor allows them to understand the basics of the medurr Imperium.

At the center of their empire, the Empress rules with the help of the Aalnorum, a council of eleven ancient matriarchs who represent the original twelve from whom sprang all the subclans of the medurr. The Empress represents her clan at the head of the Aalnorum as the most powerful clan among the Twelve. Clan names come from the last three letters of the mother's name, and while it is difficult for other species to follow, medurr know their clan family links all the way back to their clan representative among the Aalnorum. The central skeleton of medurr society is a broad tribal culture built around family and clan units.

The medurr as a species are constantly expanding outward for two reasons. First, each female medurr believes she has a manifest destiny to dominate some city, country, continent, planet, or system. The medurr instill this attitude in their young at birth, which leads to the might makes right arrogance of many *ash*, or leader subspecies (see The Master Race section for more information). Second, medurr have a difficult time living together in large numbers because of natural animosity among siblings. This hostility expresses itself in a far worse manner among those not born into the same clan. To keep from destroying each other the medurr expand outward.

When broadening their empire, the medurr increase their political clout by locating and capturing new technologies and new resources. The most powerful clan (led by the clan's head female, who gains the title of Empress on ascension) gains and keeps that position through power alone. When a clan believes that it can best the Empress' resources, they can attempt to claim the throne by using their own resources to overwhelm and depose her. Over the past seven centuries, each of the Twelve Clans has held the Imperial Throne for a time.

Whether dealing with people and planets or technology, medurr either conquer or destroy to gain what they want. If medurr encounter new technologies (including any ranged weapons above PL6 or certain PL7 weapons and computer gear), they are likely to try to acquire the technology to improve their weaponry. This is their method of advancement: get the greater weapon, and either slay your superior or be slain.

Technically adept medurr exist to further each clan's effort to gain superior firepower and resources. Dhamrin, a slave species of the medurr, along with other as-yet unrevealed species, develop and maintain most, if not all, of the weapons and technology in the Imperium. In fact, the medurr maintain that they do not totally reduce their slaves to menial jobs and that they "trust them with the prized task of tending the technology." As some Verga Rangers discovered while mindwalking, the pacifistic dhamrin developed much of the power and ship technology that the medurr use. The medurr appropriated it from the dhamrin after conquering their star system with little resistance.

Medurr society splits itself based on what target they tend to hunt or destroy, and how they go about neutralizing the threats of others to their existing power base. In short, medurr stratify themselves by their specific type of fighting: namely, which warrior's role they take on—and what common goal they follow. The generic grash fulfill the

Medurr as Heroes

The medurr can definitely become heroes, though their basic arrogance, foul temperamental, and need for structured ranks and orders make it difficult for them to work with other heroes. While medurr do not become generally known in the Verga until early 2504, a few advance scouts serve among the honor guard and the clan of the medurr ambassador. They could be placed on detached duty among humans affiliated with the Concord. Individual medurr have a tendency to dominate those who allow them to do so and expect anyone they defeat (rather than kill) to defer to them. Once a pecking order of strength is set, medurr can be quite an asset to a hero group. Whether they respect other heroes or not, medurr weigh group battle tactics to use everyone's strengths, though they cannot plan tactics for Mindwalkers, given their distaste for politics. Medurr heroes adhere to these Ability Score minimums and maximums:

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
12/18	4/11	8/14	8/12	8/14	4/12

Medurr gain the following broad skills before deciding on subspecies or professions: Athletics, Unarmed Attack, Movement, Stamina, Tactics, and Resolve. Remember to adjust all attacks and defenses to the medurr's armor and Strength.

Outfit medurr with at least one ranged weapon, one personal weapon, and a harness. Any other equipment adopted by the medurr may be at least twice as expensive, as things need to be custom-designed for their size and hand shape.

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role of the soldier, their primary targets are any nonmedurr, and their primary goal is to conquer. *Khain* take on the role of the assassin, with their targets being the political opponents of the medurr (both medurr and nonmedurr) and their goal of maintaining the Aal-norum. *Train* are the hunters who believe that their goal is to provide for the squad or colony or whatever group they're formally attached to. Their targets consist of wild beasts of any kind that are also edible (by medurr standards). Finally, the *aain*, or leaders, destroy or conquer any nonmedurr or enemies in an effort to gain further power or protect the power base that they already possess.

Humanity still has many other aspects of medurr society and life to discover. While some known aspects cause a certain amount of reticence on the part of the Vergers, the medurr's vociferous hatred of the Externals provides common ground for the Verge and the Imperium to travel the stars together for a time. As each learns of the other, they may draw closer together or further apart. For now, these allies of war fight a seemingly endless array of enemies, and that is enough for the stellar nations and the Verge.

The Master Race

Like humanity's distinctions, the medurr share a common biology with minor distinctions. While this rarely limits other species, the biological distinctions often predetermine which life a medurr lives at the time of hatching. Raised communally within a clan all linked by one egg-laying matriarch, each of the four subspecies performs certain martial and social functions. Any adjustments to Ability Scores based on medurr types cannot exceed the maximums set in the sidebar called Medurr as Heroes.

Aain: The Leaders

Every *aain* is female. Medurr leadership follows matriarchal lineages. Female medurr have higher, more pronounced dorsal ridges and lighter stomach scales than males. Only one out of eight eggs hatches a female, and until she comes to egg-bearing age (21 years, though she is physically grown at age 16), she can be of any of the other classifications before she becomes an *aain*.

Once she reaches maturity, she becomes *aain* and gains a file of her own. Senior *aains* commonly command entire systems, with their daughters ruling the planets or important outposts within it. From this post, a junior *aain* can slay her *aain* mother and claim her social and political position, filling any subordinate posts with weaker sisters and daughters. Alternatively, she can lead by proxy and expand the Imperium by commanding a ship of her clutich off into the Trimaara Expanse (including the Verge and other areas of the Orion Arm).

Graain: The Soldiers

By far the most common of their species, graain are massive medurr with a moderate dorsal ridge and a rougher scale pattern. Most people assume means their armor is tougher than other medurr. More than seven out of ten medurr encountered in the Verge are graain, and they predominantly choose Combat Spec as a profession.

Graain automatically receive one free rank of Stamina-resist pain during character creation, but suffer a +1 step penalty when attempting any Stealth skill checks.

Khain: The Assassins

The 'Dark Ones' stand out with darker scales, more prominent claws and teeth, and a slighter and sleeker build than the average medurr. The *khain* train in stealth, speed, and secrecy. They are the shadows among the medurr and their servitor species. For more than two hundred years, more than half the Aalnarums members have been of *khain* birth. While a few choose to rise among the military as Combat Specs, most *khain* take the path of the Free Agent and become part of the medurr's Black Ops.

Khain automatically gain two free ranks of Unarmed Attack-brawl and one rank of Stealth-sneak during character creation, but they suffer a +2 step penalty to both Heavy Weapons and Stamina skill checks.

Train: The Hunters

Often born with extremely sharp dorsal ridges and dappled scale colors ranging from dark browns and greens to as light as ochre, the *train* serve their culture by learning to fight the creatures of the wild. These providers hunt and kill much of the food that one can find stored in medurr ships. Trained to survive and to fight in any medium, they prefer nonpowered weapons "to keep the meal from tasting unnatural." *Train* gain more respect out on the frontier for their hunting abilities than they do back among the homeworlds, where domestication renders them obsolete. As partial outcasts and loners, the *train* can easily fit the Combat Spec profile, but they fill any available profession.

Train receive one free rank of Awareness-perception and Movement-trailblazing (which does not receive the normal medurr +1 step penalty for noncombat skills), but they suffer a +2 step penalty when making Modern Ranged Weapons skill checks.

Subject Species

The Medurr Imperium, by their leaders' admissions, holds at least as much territory as a small-sized stellar nation, though some among the Concord diplomats wonder if this isn't vanity. By their claim, their territory contains at least 50 life-bearing systems and numerous dominated species. As a result of having a multiracial empire, the medurr developed a common trade and diplomatic language. The language is based on the medurr tongue but includes roots in nearly all of its members' languages. This 'Imperium Standard' proved more simple for Concord linguists to understand than medurr, especially due to a notable lack of tails among all but its diplomats. Thus, each species quickly mastered each other's Standard tongue by the end of 2503.

While most presume the medurr recently encountered the blix in the Verge, at least two other species also serve the Imperium and have now become known to humanity in the Verge.

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Blix

While the medurr only recently made contact with the blix, they have little reason to admit that to the Concord. None know whether the blix traveled with the medurr to the Verge. The astonishing number of blix in the Cambria or Sage systems seems to suggest otherwise, given their scarceness elsewhere in the Verge.

Like all other species the medurr meet, they enslaved the blix and put them to work. If one asks a medurr about the blix, she or he finds out that the blix "serve the Imperium as they should and as they shall for as long as they exist in our sight." Any medurr who encounter other blix beyond Cambria or Sage may attempt to lay claim to them as slaves, either fully believing them to be escapees or wishing to merely goad its allies into a fight. In either case, no medurr treats a blix with anything more than contempt.

Many Verge diplomats find themselves furiously trying to establish some lines of communication with the blue-skinned mechanics. That some of the blix's kind have become enslaved seems not to bother the species. The Concord leaders hope to find a way to communicate with them and possibly learn more medurr tech secrets, since the enslaved blix repair and modify the medurr tech just as effortlessly as they do human and faal technology.

Dhamrin

The first person to suggest that the dhamrin and the medurr seem to share the same morphology still rests in a hospital on Bluefall. The obvious six-limbed serpentine body structure suggests a possible common ancestor (though it is unknown if the dhamrin and the medurr came from the same planet) or at least some concurrent evolution. Dhamrin, a former amphibious species, have sleek hairless skins of variable coloration. Their heads are oval and set flat on a long flexible neck, with the rear of the head growing more angular over time. The dhamrin walk on four slender tentacular legs, giving them an undulating gait across flat surfaces. Their upper tentacles are stronger and more agile, the dhamrin use them as arms despite having only two fingers and one opposable thumb on each end. The skinny trunk of a dhamrin and its long limbs make people believe this species is weak, though most dhamrin easily make up for their lack of strength in speed.

Their primary responsibility seems to be piloting the medurr ships. They have both great dexterity and an innate spatial sense, making them unbelievable pilots. Their other tasks as technicians have been subsumed slightly by the blix, though they retain command over these new comrades as senior technicians. (Though this is more because the dhamrin understand the blix and wish to protect them from the wrath of their new masters.) They accept nearly any situation stoically, since their entire species believes in pacifism ardently and accepts their role among the medurr.

Palai

The most numerous of the servitors, the palai act as menial servants, catering to every need of the medurr. Small fur-covered creatures, the palai were once a simple FL3 species thrust into space by the medurr and their need for more slaves. They do their

best to serve as cooks, porters, attendants, valets, weapon polishers, or other menial laborers.

Palai always talk with what humans perceive as a nervous stutter though many attribute that to a side effect of serving one of the most intimidating species in space. Between their small size and their timidity, many underestimate them, including the medurr. They have prodigious strength and speed for their size. Whenever a palai sees a chance to escape, she or he takes it, though the slave braces rarely allows the slave to get far.

History

The medurr mentioned no history in the Concord talks, as they hyperbolically claimed, "Aside from knowing which of the Great Matriarchs our clan sprang from and what battles we have won, behind us are only battlefields and dead enemies." Still, they have some small amount of history in the Verge, or at least with their contacts with humanity. Thus, while the medurr seem to place little merit in history, the Concord and other powers find much to look at in the medurr's brief contact with humanity and the Verge.

No fewer than forty years before any contact with humanity, the medurr arrived at Cambria during the days of the Long Silence in the Verge. Since the Vergers ignored the system ignored, no one noticed as the medurr built a colony on the Dinosaur Planet. Whether humans accept it or not, Cambria II has defined the farthest frontier of the Medurr Imperium for more than three decades. During that time, some other *asin* have expanded the borders of Clan Vys's domain by staking claims to the Sage system and setting a trap loose near the Lucullus system.

First encountered by humanity outside the Lucullus system in June of 2502, the medurr placed a ship out in interstellar space and used their trap to test and study humanity and how it reacted to situations. The hulk (the medurr riftship) gained the attentions of numerous Lucullans. This first contact ended with the withdrawal of all hands away from the ship and a firefight with seven medurr needle ships.

Within three months of that brief contact, the Concord began preliminary first contact talks with "the dragons" on their ship outside of Lucullus. After six months of informal negotiations and basic information exchanges from each side, the medurr diplomat Stykor of Clan Vys agreed to more formal meetings and discussions with the Concord and other Verge powers in the Aegis system. Despite garchy and teln assassination attempts on her life, *asin* Stykor survived the trip from Lucullus to Aegis. After refusing to negotiate with "weakening speakers," she stonewalled negotiations until Concord Administrators Sela Tavis, Hank Ward, and Rick Carter became the only diplomatic officials able to match her and her honor guard in personal combat. By the June of 2503, she and Tavis built the tentative alliance among the Medurr Imperium and the Concord.

Since the signing of the Aegis Imperium Accords, medurr have begun appearing in small groups around the Lucullus and Aegis systems. Stykor remains at Bluefall, continuing to meet with many diplomats wishing to endear themselves to this new player on the interstellar chessboard. Because of Stykor's martial interview process, hospital leave for many diplomats is on the rise. The Con-

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cord wishes to make a more binding pact with Matriarch Tolvys at Cambria in the near future

Medurr in the Verge

The medurr have been humanity's neighbors in the Verge for far longer than any anticipated. As a result of planned stealth and the basic limits of their transportation methods, they remained hidden for more than thirty years, though they did not remain inactive. Locations and activities of all medurr in the Verge center on three key systems.

The Cambria System. Medurr consider this fully established colony a backwater outpost in the scope of how things are within the Imperium. However, given its remote placement within what they call the Trimaarn Expanse (the Verge), the medurr there consider it to be the core of the Clan Vys demesne. Tolvys, the *aahn* who led the medurr here four decades ago, considers the sweltering planet her capital. Given the lack of interest by other leaders, Tolvys plans to rule this area, allowing her *aahn* daughters Stykor and Paeran and their daughters to explore the Trimaarn Expanse for plunder and territory. The system's major strategic importance for the matriarch ties to its orbital star rift, which directly links the Verge and the Medurr Imperium.

The Lucullus System. Since first contact with the medurr (fully discussed in the novel *Zero Point* and summarized in *Threats from Beyond*), the medurr riftship remains roughly two light years outside the system. It is no longer a derelict hulk: It now serves a combination of purposes. While it is primarily a space station and medurr shipyard, it also serves as the political and military lynchpin of power for Stykor and the seven daughters and calans under her. Teran of Clan Ror, second daughter of Stykor, commands the riftship and its fleet of 48 fighters ("slivers"), 18 scouts ("needles"), 6 freighters (as yet unseen), and 4 corvettes ("briars"). While she bristles at the lack of territory to conquer, Teran makes plans for her future with the former Helixtech official Karren Borun. Despite his lack of physical strength, his power to procure ship construction materials as well as information makes him a useful ally for her, since she plans to usurp this fleet and all that her mother controls soon.

The Sage System. Sennacherib, the singular moon of Sage's third planet of Sargon, is a dry, dusty satellite that Stykor's niece, Sullas of Clan Ren, claims. This minor outpost provides food for the fleets at Lucullus and elsewhere, and the riftship stationed here provides supply lines to medurr ships in need of the great tudd carcasses harvested daily by their hunters.

Since the discovery of medurr colonial activities in two systems, some stellar officials privately fret over a medurr invasion as much as they fear one from the other Externals. Though they perform little reconnaissance on the systems, the Concord plans to check the surrounding systems for signs of medurr occupation. While the Cambrian and Sage developments are accepted, any medurr activity in the Dolthan, Strome, and Walin systems could become the first diplomatic strain placed on this new alliance.

Technology

Given that the Medurr Imperium is nearly as far removed from the Verge as both are from the Stellar Ring of Old Space, it surprises

few that Imperial technology operates far differently than human norms. Below are the brief notes culled by preliminary examinations of medurr technology and what data they shared with the Concord.

Energy

The most exciting prospect of allying with the medurr is humanity's chance to learn and benefit from zero point energy (PL8 power generation technology). Contrary to the normal laws of thermodynamics, the medurr create more energy in vacuum fluctuation reactions than they expend, granting them almost unlimited supplies of energy at an undreamt-of scale. However, while all medurr ships and recharging units rely on such energy, this mode of power proves incompatible with many alien-built systems, most often overloading human-built mechanisms. (This incompatibility with medurr power systems has also kept the medurr from adopting any weapons from their foes.)

Metallurgy

Medurr construct their ships by some yet-unknown process, though their semi-organic structures suggest they are grown as a whole rather than built component by component. Their base metal, from which all their known ships and weapons are made, proves as strong and resistant to harm as neutronite plating. Thus, all medurr weapons and technology are of Good type durability unless stated otherwise. All medurr ships have d6 (light), d8+2 (moderate), or d8+1 (heavy) armored resistance against all types of damage. No one knows if this is a mineralogical property of the metal or a result of the medurr forging process.

Secretly, as the dhamrin informed some telepaths, the metallurgy and the shipbuilding technology are among the few sciences that the medurr created themselves, rather than plundered from a vanquished culture.

Weaponry

While the forms and sizes of weapons and defenses seem radically different, medurr weapons retain certain basics from the *ALTERNITY Player's Handbook*. They have analogs of all types of ranged weaponry up to PL6, though precious few beyond that. Their hand-to-hand weapons match humanity's equivalents up to PL7. Below are specific examples of medurr weapons tech found in the Verge.

Bharis: Medurr Slave Braces

Medurr slaves wear *bharis*, or thick metal collars, around their necks (pa'al) or wrists (dhamrin). They act as Ordinary rank tracking devices. They stun their wearers with d8+4s each round if they get more than a kilometer away from their control unit (either kept in a command post or worn by their master). Anyone with access to the units can activate the stun effects at will. A mobile unit can control 8 *bharis*, while a stationary unit can command up to 48 individual *bharis*. These braces cannot be removed from a slave without causing serious harm (2d4 points of mortal damage).

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Bhrork: Tailstunner

Worn on the end of medurr tails, the *bhrork* is a melee weapon that acts just like a power cactus and can be used as an additional attack if opponents stand behind or beside the medurr within the tail's movement arc (which has a reach of 2 to 3 meters,

Bhruak: Quake Staff

The *bhruak* is a powerful melee weapon that damages targets like a gravmace, though its massive size prevents any creatures other than medurr or werau from wielding it. It inflicts d6+1w/d8+1w/d6m damage.

Darnaht: Handcannon

The *darnaht* is a heavy short-barreled device that resembles, to human eyes, a small cannon. Its ammunition consists of large clusters of metal shrapnel and needles. Its effects and damage are exactly the same as an autocollchette rifle, though its effective range is reduced (6/12/30).

Ehlissa: Medurr Harnesses

Worn almost more like fashion or common clothing more than defensive gear, many types of *ehlissa* are used among the medurr, with the three below being most common. All are crossed baidrics of metal chain with some interlaced circuitry worn over the torso (Good quality personal defenses).

Armor Harness: A small armored plate connects the harness at its crosses, and its circuitry creates a gravity field to enhance natural medurr body armor by +2/+2/+3 for up to eight hours at a time.

Flight Harness: This works identically to zero-G webs.

Heat Harness: This provides protection identical with an soft a-suit without an air supply.

The Medurr Imperium has conquered incredible amounts of space thanks to their innate ambition and their incomparable star rift technology. Without taking a trip to Imperium space itself, one cannot speculate on which aspects of medurr ship sciences are theirs from their initial forays into space and which they appropriated



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Medurr Ranks and Titles

All medurr, or at least all those in the Verge, have ranks to reflect their militarily controlled society. All ranks have been translated out of medurr and into Galactic Standard with approximations to aid in understanding how they rank themselves. The ranks, described below, organized from lowest to highest, include details on the common bearers of such titles. Bear in mind, however, that a female medurr holding the same rank as a male still has far more social power.

Talki/Slave: Nonmedurr comprises the lowest rank, and this rank refers to anyone responsible for manual tasks.

Talki/Barl: Almost entirely nonmedurr, barls are the skilled slaves or favored slaves of the salin. Their training and skills separate them from the talki as they can operate machinery, cook, or read and write.

Marrd/Servant: The highest rank any point ever reaches (see Imperium Species), the educated servant class is above tasks that need only purely physical exertion. They often act as highly skilled vessels with as command of their own. Most of the medurr's ship technicians are nonmedurr of this rank. Some dishonored or defeated medurr fall to this rank, forced on equal terms by defeat or disgrace, until such time that they prove themselves worthy of a higher title through combat or other means.

Marrd/Private: Most male medurr stand at the rank of marrd. Also at this rank, though still seen as socially weaker, are nonmedurr senior technicians, pilots, navigators, gunners, and translators. Unlike the lower ranks, killing a marrd is a crime unless it is done when challenging higher-ranking medurr. Marrd is the highest rank within the Imperium that any nonmedurr can rise.

Tanek/Lieutenant: Tanek is the first rank at which a medurr can order other medurr around (while all medurr can order slaves beneath them around). Most often, medurr of tanek ranking command a platoon or a fighter/silver ship. This is also the least title held by any salin. While slaves can fall to lower ranks, salin who disgrace themselves at this ranking can be destroyed by a rival medurr salin with no negative repercussions.

Tanek/Captain/Mayer: Whether in charge of a needle ship or part of a settlement, the rank of tanek denotes a major command and leap in social power for medurr. This is often the starting rank for salin coming to maturity.

Bortaned/Colonel/Major Noble: Bortaned is the highest rank achievable by male medurr unless they are taken as mates by salin. Medurr of this rank command squadrons of scout ships (or a complement of fighters carried on a brar ship), legions of troops, a riftship or space station, or whole colonies and all their settlements.

Keshnash/General/Major Noble: Medurr rank of the keshnash rank are commanders of whole fleets of ships, armies, or multiple colonies led by one's daughters. In the Imperium, this rank usually denotes control of a whole system.

Sollkeshnash/Queen/Matriarch: Equivalent in human terms to the stellar nobles, the sollkeshnash rank affords control of multiple systems (or, in this case, all medurr resources and holdings in the Verge).

from conquered species. Verge Ranger psi reports from the dhamrin ship technicians suggest that the zero point energy systems came from the dhamrin millennia ago, and they don't know how the star rifts came into being. All they know is that the zero point technology provides enough energy to make the star rifts feasible.

Medurr Ships

All medurr ships follow a specific aesthetic, set by the building process or by choice. Their ships possess dark hulls with massive jutting spires and dark whorls and hollows of metal. Straight lines are rare, if not totally absent, on medurr ships, and bulkheads do not recede into walls—they are created and destroyed as virtual matter (another feat made possible only through the nigh-endless zero point energy). Internal weapons include EMP and stutter type guns, while ships' weapons tend to be limited to PL6 weapons with the exception of gravitic rams on silver ships and plasma cannons on needle ships and other larger vessels. They are also limited to sublight speeds outside of star rifts. The following ship notes come with names given to the ships during first contact with the medurr.

The first ship encountered—a riftship—appears more as a small space station or frail generation ship in relative size. Once operated by cryosleeping medurr and sent off blind through normal space to scout out new territory, the riftship in Lucullus is operated by an AI that now helps manage the shipyards. Riftships provide power and life support facilities for up to 40 medurr and 140 slaves (20 of which are dhamrini pilots and technicians).

Silvers are the medurr fighters, barely larger than a skytank but spaceworthy. They provide berths for a dhamrini pilot, a medurr gunner, and a dhamrini technician.

Needle Ships compare in size to attack or escort ships. These scouts, troop transports, and corvette class ships are 20 meters in diameter and 100 meters long, holding up to 16 medurr troops (or far more slave troops back in the Imperium). They also have a medurr captain, two medurr gunners, and four dhamrini (two technicians, a pilot, and a navigator).

Brar Ships act as the carriers of a medurr fleet, capable of berthing up to four needle ships and two score silver ships (or 200 fighters without the larger ships) within its holds. Brar ships gained their names by seeming to be a tangle of spires and points. Over 500 meters long and 120 meters in diameter, these massive ships have been the largest and most frightening ships seen in the medurr arsenal.

Obviously, other medurr ships exist that correlate to the human and other racial equivalents of heavy troop transports, shuttles, common trade ships, not to mention the larger capital ships. However, given their modes of transporting themselves across the galaxy (most if not all the Vergers will ever see of medurr ships are strictly military class vessels).

Star Rifts

While humans have yet to see a true star rift, reports from the riftship encounter beyond Lucullus give them an idea of what to expect: mechanisms that establish an energy tunnel, that links the end location of the rift with another spatial site. Both are open at

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the time of transit, allowing for instantaneous travel across immeasurable distances. Aside from riftships, which are used to establish temporary presences in systems, permanent star rifts look like huge dark metal circles in orbit within an AU of a star, and they directly tap the star to power the rifts. Activating a star rift requires command code transmissions from a ship. The signal opens the rift and send a pulse to the star rift the ship wishes to reach. While it is unknown how long it takes for signals to reach the Imperium, ships can move from Cambria to the Lucullus rift-ship after a delay of only 48 hours. The only known star rifts in the Verge include one in place around Cambria and one under construction near Sage, which is manned entirely by blks. Only two riftships came with Clan Vys. The one near Lucullus has been left operational while the blk cannibalize the other for the Sage star rift.

The dhamrin suggest that it is possible to open a star rift and fly through it blindly without an open destination. However, this poses an even greater danger than starfalling without a navigational heading, since the distances traveled are utterly random. Using a star rift without a link to another rift sends a ship d20+4 light-years in a random direction. Given the medurr's lack of fast engines, this tactic came into play only with sleeper and AI driven

riftships, which were launched out into the great beyond to expand the Imperium once the ship's sensors found a suitable system.

Communication

Medurr and all their servitors remain very tight-lipped about their methods of communication, though it is apparent by their fascination with Grids that they have nothing comparable to them in the Imperium. However they communicate across interstellar distances, the response time seems far faster than drivespace relays or intersystem radio.

Imperium Species

While hardly the only species found within the Medurr Imperium, the medurr, the dhamrin, and the pafal are the only known representatives yet encountered by humanity. While statistics for these species are given below, conversations with the medurr and the dhamrin reveal the names and hinted morphologies of other Imperium species. These include the timarn, the nigram and the esyor. The timarn are an enslaved and nearly extinct primate species, similar to humans, who are possibly responsible for de-

Medurr Ecological Data

Biotechnology: Series I

Environment: Class 2

GRAFM: G3/R2/A2/T3/H2

Biome: Any land

Extinction Chance: Unlikely

Group Size: 1-12 (d12)

Organization: Militaristic matrixarchy/imperial oligarchy

Nicks: Omnivore

Intelligence: Sentient

Medurr Game Data

These statistics represent a typical *greath* medurr living and working in the Cambrian colony or attached to one of the medurr fleets. While most medurr are close to hero-class characters, this is the minimal supporting cast member one may meet.

STR 13	(2d6+6)	INT 8	(2d4+3)
DEX 10	(2d4+5)	WIL 9	(d8+4)
CON 11	(2d4+6)	PER 9	(d8+4)
Durability:	16/16/8/4	Action check:	10+/9/4/2
Moves:	sprint 22, run 14, walk 4	#Actions:	2
Reaction score:	Ordinary/2	Last resorts:	1

Attacks

Bite/Teeth	13/6/3	d4+2w/d6w/2d4w	L1/0
Claws ¹	13/6/3	d8s/d4+2w/d4-1ra	L1/0
Unarmed ²	13/6/3	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s	L1/0

¹ Only black medurr (*scavengers*) have sharp claws of this nature. While a medurr might possibly claw up on its tail and hind legs, the extra limbs brought in bear in an attack only count as unarmed damage, as any hind leg claws are worn down by their use as feet.

² Medurr can use either a hand or their tail as an unarmed attack, allowing up to two unarmed attacks (arm, tail) per phase, unless a claw attack replaces one. If used to attack a foe in front of a medurr, tail attacks suffer a +1 step penalty.

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

+2 resistance modifier vs. psionics

Armor: d6 (L1), d4+1 (H1), d4 (En)

Skills

Brain/Medurr Standard Combat Spec: Athletics [13], Unarmed Attack [13]-*brawl* [15], Modern Ranged Weapons [10]-*pistol* [12], Movement [11], Stamina [11]-*endurance* [12], resist pain [12], System Operations [8], Tactics [8], Awareness [9], Resolve [9]-*physical* [10], Interaction [9]-*intimidate* [10].

[Khain Free Agent with adjusted statistics] Athletics [11], Unarmed Attack [11]-*power martial arts* [12], Acrobatics [11]-*defensive martial arts* [12], Stealth [11]-*hide* [12], shadow [12], sneak [12], Movement [10], Stamina [10], Tactics [8], Awareness [9]-*perception* [11], Resolve [9]-*physical* [10].

[Train with adjusted statistics] Athletics [12], Unarmed Attack [12], Modern Ranged Weapons [10]-*pistol* [12], Acrobatics [10]-*dodge* [12], *fall* [12], Movement [11]-*trailblazing* [13], Stamina [11], Survival [11], Tactics [8], Awareness [8]-*intuition* [10], Investigate [9]-*track* [10], Resolve [8]-*physical* [10].

Starting at 2nd level, female medurr (*the sein*) must learn additional skills in this order (at least one per level): Leadership-command, Interaction-bargain, Culture-diplomacy, Culture-first contact, Leadership-inspire, and Administration-bureaucracy.



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veloping the virtual matter technology. The nigram are a cruel client species of cephalopod slavedrivers located near one side of Imperium space. Their cybernetic expertise provided the slave colars that grow with the slave but cannot be removed without serious harm. The esyor are, along with the dhamrin, one of the earliest conquered species in the Imperium. They are a species of avian people who created the defensive harnesses now common to the medurr.

Medurr

Initial communications difficulties in finding common ground aside, our negotiations with the medurr should prove beneficial to all the species of the Verge. While I handled the initial contacts with Aaln Strykor, my only saving grace in their eyes was that I am a female. Since that time, Administrator Tavis acts as Strykor's primary contact, as Strykor has taken a liking to the administrator since Tavis saved the aaln from some gerdhyi assassins on Bluefall. Both of us have tried to convince Strykor that we must establish communications with her superiors, but she dismisses the request as unnecessary.

As loathe as I am to admit it, the Thuidans and Austrin Ontis, as well as the weren, may be the key to integrating medurr into our interstellar society. After all, the medurr respect only physical might and strength, weapons of power, and warrior cultures similar to their own. By placing these sorts of allies around them, it provides them with a familiar atmosphere and allies who think and act more as they do. Be that as it may, the Concord must remain vigilant that the stellar nations do not put their own agendas before those of the alliance needed to protect the Verge.

The most disturbing factor of working with the medurr is the constant reminder of their status as a slaveholding species. Their palaf servants remain constantly at hand, and only a few slaves seem to have any autonomy of their own. Their dhamrinni pilots are more accessible. Yet though they covertly make limited contact with some Mindwalkers to educate us further about the Imperium and the medurr, any suggestion that the dhamrin might be freed from slavery causes only resigned sighs and broken contact.

—Concord Diplomat Jen Qualid

Description. Medurr are a hexapeda, saurian species, moving around on four hind legs and using the foremost limbs as arms. Ranging from 5 to 7 meters in length and 200 kilograms in weight, medurr more often stand erect, looming 2.5 to 3 meters high. While reptilian in appearance with armored skins and long tails, only their ruthless nature is cold-blooded. With razor-sharp teeth and equally sharp claws, medurr are the first intelligent species encountered to challenge the weren's superiority at intimidating humans. Their massive four-fingered hands are strong but far more agile than would seem at first glance. Their hides tend to span from a light sea green to a black emerald green (depending on age and subspecies), and their underside (bottom of tail, chest, and belly) scales tend toward brown scales amid their normal color. Medurr are as equally adaptable to various climes and biomes as humans, though they have a higher tolerance for temperature extremes.

Encounter. While among the fiercest looking creatures encountered by humanity, medurr rarely attack first in any situation. They prefer to measure their foes by their leading attacks and answer in kind. Granted, all encounters highlight their aggressiveness and ruthlessness in battle, as well as their innate cunning. Medurr charge forward, but they always seek to flank an enemy and attack from the sides, with their point attack serving as the distraction. While females can and do take command and give verbal orders, the discipline of most medurr (especially the *graals*) makes this unnecessary. However, medurr never allow a female to lead an attack due to their social and political importance, not due to any misguided chauvinism.

Medurr in general favor melee combat given their size and protective hides, often recklessly charging through weapon fire to close ranks with the enemy. While some find it satisfying enough, most medurr care little for starship combat, preferring to smell their opponents' fear and blood. While far more advanced technologically they share the animal passions exhibited among weren. Even when fully engaged in battle, medurr do not succumb to any battle frenzy or passion—their attitudes in battle are inscrutably quiet and eerily dispassionate. Only after the battle do they let loose with unbridled fury or pride.

One wild card effect in battling medurr comes up more often in the Verge than anywhere in Imperium space—psionics. Medurr neurophysiology seems antithetical to psionics in some ways, which accounts for their resistances as well as their total lack of Mindwalkers or mindwalking talents among them. What it also does is serve as a warning for them. Any psionic contact, either telepathically or telekinetically with a medurr mind or body has a chance of rebounding. This forces the mindwalker to make a Will test check at +1 step penalty or else suffer d4–1 points of stun damage per round of contact. The medurr rarely notice the intrusions, though successful mental attacks on them invoke great rage and an almost certain drive for vengeance.

Habitat Society. Despite initial shocks and primal fears of the medurr species, humans and the other species of known space

Marvystarkol Population

41,000 Sentients

Alien	100%		
Elix	2%	Medurr: Aaln	0.002%
Dhamrin	12%	Medurr: Khain	2%
Palaf	55%	Medurr: Graals	25%
Other	?	Medurr: Train	4%

"Including Matriarch Talrys, between nine and fourteen adult leaders of varying age dwell in the Cambrin system. Six of them are each in charge of a colony plateau and its contingents. Another three are each in charge of a hjar ship or the Vynol star rift. Of the nine adult aaln, six are graals, two are train, and Matriarch Talrys is the sole khain leader.

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have much in common with them. A spacefaring species, the medurr exist at Progress Level 7. Though much of their weaponry and standard equipment exists at PL6, their star rift and zero point energy PL8 technologies make them equal to any of the stellar nations.

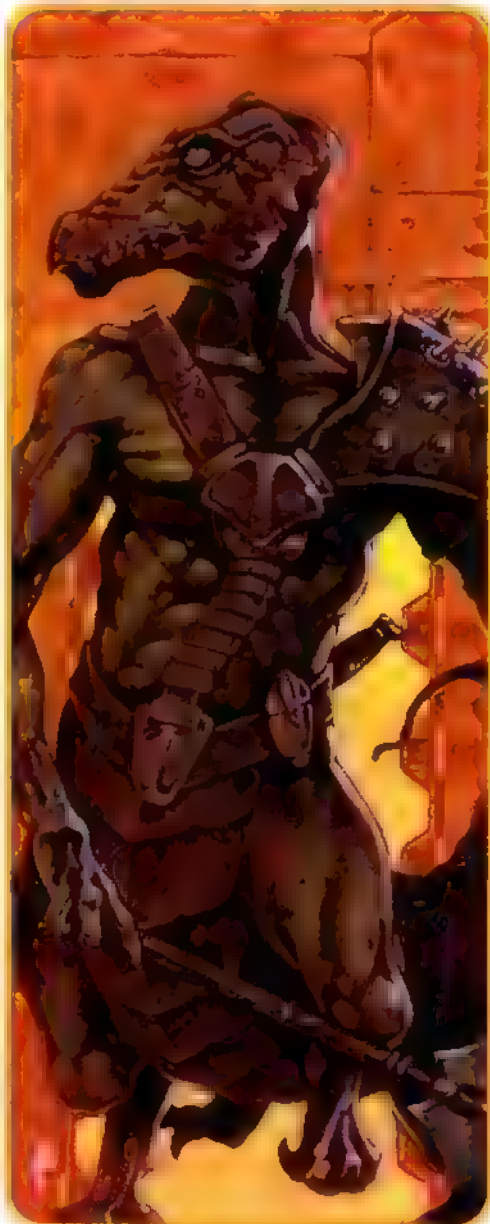
The first key to understanding the medurr comes from seeing the discipline and structure of their militaristic society. Ability and strength determine one's rank, though birth also contributes in some cases, as *aahn*/females receive automatically higher ranks. While medurr military corresponds loosely to similar structures among the Thuidans and the Austrins, one doesn't wait for promotion - one seizes it either due to desire for the rank and privileges or due to a weakness or failure of one's superior. Medurr easily point out that their Imperium is only as strong as its weakest leader, and the people have a right and a duty to force the matriarchs to be strong and smart.

The second key to the medurr is respect, and they respect only those who have proven themselves. Their initial assessment of humanity had them looking at enslaving more worlds until three Concord Administrators matched three medurr in a trial by combat. (They also secretly hint that the Fekl Consortium, known to humanity as the Externals, have gained their respect simply for surviving for so long against them.) They respect an enemy that can resist them in open combat. Aside from the necessities of life for the *kbahn* and *trah*, medurr rarely if ever use guerrilla tactics, preferring open combat and clearly disdaining hit-and-run strategies or snipers.

Aahn leaders provide a more balanced view of medurr as their weapons tend to be words, whether orders or politics. They rarely enter battles due to their importance to the power structure. Females always have the most elaborate quarters, whether on a colony or ship. Additionally, they never travel far without their honor guards, who act as bodyguards and a private harem for the *aahn*.

The guard positions within an *aahn's* staff provide one of the ways male medurr can raise their own social status. However medurr do not mate for life - females often use their harems as a means to obfuscate any claims a male medurr might attempt to place on any egg born into the clan. Aside from positions among an *aahn's* honor guard, male medurr can seek advancement through the Imperium military.

A male medurr's life is full of opportunities, but the males are always limited by their inability to claim a clan or even parenage unless unique characteristics of the parent are seen in the child. Their lives are spent in duty, where they can rise in rank and command slaves and fellow medurr. However, their social ranks are always deemed one lower if dealing with a female of equal military rank. There have been great male medurr heroes and generals, though the numbers are far fewer than Vergers might expect. In all, the few males exposed to humanity and its equal or patriarchal societies find them strange but intriguing, though it will take some time before male medurr go rogue for a chance at being leaders outside the Imperium.



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Dhamrin

This obviously advanced species once was an aquatic species adapted to land and space alike. While appearing small and delicate, dhamrin show remarkable tenacity, patience, and strength. Like the fraal, dhamrin are characterized by the few who meet them as "ethereal" or "gossamer," concepts that are quickly abandoned when folk see a dhamrinni easily heft heavy loads in one tentacle with seemingly little strain.

Description Standing 1 to 2 meters tall, a dhamrinni appears as a large cephalopod or amphibian at first glance, its sleek hairless skin varying from eggshell white to a mocha brown. Hexipeda. Like their medurr masters, dhamrin stand on four thick tentacles sprouting from the lower two-thirds of their slimy, sinuous trunks. The other two tentacles each end with two fingers and an opposable thumb and are almost as thick as its torso. They have ovoid heads atop a long, flexible neck, with the base of their skulls resting just behind the short jaw. The rear of a dhamrinni skull has an indentation in line with its spinal column, and the skull comes to separate rounded points centered with the hemisphere of its brain. Dhamrinni eyes fascinate many xenobiologists. Their wide dark

Dhamrin Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 1
GRAPH: G2/R2/A2/P2/H2
Homo: Any land
Encounter Chance: Unlikely
Group Size: 3-12 (3d4)
Organization: Enslaved pacifist communal society
Niche: Herbivore
Intelligence: Sentient

purple to deep blue eyes are fully dilated at all times. A secondary membranous eyelid rises over the eyes to shield them from too much light. The outer eyelids iris as well, screwing the eyes shut rather than laterally closing the eyes.

Gender differences among the dhamrin are obvious even to the most close-minded of humans. Like humans and mechalus, dhamrin females have breasts as a secondary sexua. characteristic and for feeding their young. Secondly, the bicameral split at the back



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Dhamrin Game Data

Note: These statistics reflect a typical dhamrinni slave living and working in the Cambrian colony or attached to the medurr fleet, just as with humans, most dhamrinni are not hero-class characters.

STR 8 (d6+6) INT 11 (3d4+3)
DEX 10 (2d6+4) WIL 7 (d8+4)
CON 12 (2d4+8) PER 10 (2d4+6)
Durability: 12/12/6/3 Action check: 11+/10/5/2
Move: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4 #Actions: 2
Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last resorts: 1

Attacks

Unarmed B/4/2 d4/d4+1a/d4+2a LWQ

Defenses

no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
+1 INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
no WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
Armor: none (LH), none (HL), none (En)

Skills

Unarmed Attack [8], Acrobatics [10]—*dodge* [11], Manipulation [10], Vehicle Operations [10], Stamina [12]—*endurance* [13], Computer Science [11], Navigation [11]—*system* [12], Systems Operation [11], Awareness [7]—*intuition* [9], perception [9], Resolve [7]—*mental* [9], Interaction [10], ESP¹ [11]—*navcognition* [12], Telepathy¹ [10]—*contact* [12].

¹ All dhamrin are born with innate psionic abilities, though they are latent and activated only by touch or used subconsciously (navcognition subtly adds a -2 step bonus to all piloting- or Dexterity-based defensive maneuvers). Even with these psionic gifts among them, only four dhamrinni out of a thousand have the potential to become a full Mindwalker, even if the medurr could be persuaded to not throw free for such training.

of their heads is more pronounced in females, and their skulls slope slightly up along those points (whereas a male's skull slopes slightly down).

Encounter: The first thing many folk notice of the dhamrin is their relative paucity of speech. Almost immediately after that, they notice that dhamrin rarely stop moving, since some part of them all ways stretches or undulates. Thurdly, no one can attest to ever seeing a dhamrinni get touched if it did not wish to be touched. Unbelievably fast and agile, dhamrin seem skittish and cowardly to some, peaceful and serene to others. Although their quickness and agility aids them in their piloting abilities, the main reason dhamrin shy away from physical contact is that they communicate both verbally and psionically via touch. The medurr and dhamrin avoid physical contact because of this. Any talents or Mindwalkers touched by a dhamrinni can immediately use telepathy to contact the dhamrinni's mind if desired. This link remains without fail until physical contact is broken or an attack interrupts the psychic link. Their agility and piloting skills likewise linked to an innate psionic trait of ESP—*navcognition*.

A dhamrinni attacks if provoked, but it takes a lot to provoke one. Dhamrin mate for life, and either parent can easily kill if something threatens their children. A dhamrinni's attacks most often take the form of one choking tentacle on a foe's main airway, though it can sometimes attack with up to three of its tentacles by fully leaping on a foe larger than itself.

Habitat Society Dhamrin culture has been decimated by the medurr—subsumed beneath the weight of the monolithic Imperium rule. All that remains of dhamrin customs are its philosophies and its sense of belonging. An intuitive, pacifistic species, the dhamrin devoted their lives and worlds to peaceful studies of the mind and the sciences. While few among the delegations in the Verge know them, they know some of the myths that shape their people. Tantamount above them all is their belief in fate and prophecy, and they truly believe that their fate lies in their subjugation by the medurr. If prophecies have detailed their deliverance, no dhamrinni known to humanity has heard of them. They approach their lives of servitude with faith that all things are how they are meant to be. The only other philosophical tenet the dhamrin follow is this coda: "The universe provides for those with the serenity to accept."

Dhamrin seem to be the second-highest placed servitor species among the Medurr Imperium, they occupy a number of key positions among the medurr. They serve as the prime technicians, except those areas that the blix have worked themselves into. They provide some linguistic help since their natural empathy and psionic gifts help bridge the diplomatic gaps. While they are not medurr, they are rarely abused, unlike the poor pafal.

While the medurr's draconian appearance invoked fear among many humans, the dhamrin evoked far more nostalgic and awestruck emotions. The typical dhamrinni, according to some Solar military attaches at the conferences, seemed to resemble what humans thought aliens were more than 300 years ago before any major contact with other species. That aside, the dhamrin have become one of the most crucial species to aid the Concord in understanding its new allies.

Pafal

Description Like initial meetings with the edanweir of Eldala, the sight of the small, furry humanoids attending the medurr evoked some coos of delight and surprise from some attendees. The bright metal of their slave collars glinting against dark fur tempered these reactions, as did their sharply pointed teeth. Their heads and body structures marking them as evolved rodents, a pafal stands erect between 0.6 and 1 meter in height. Their hairless hands and feet seem oversized for their bodies, and the four opposable digits on any extremities provide much manual dexterity and balance. Their coats are highly water-resistant and fine-haired, bristling greatly when pafals get emotional. A longer mane surrounds their faces like enormous sideburns, which female pafal wear long at the shoulder and males keep short but allow to rise high. Some Solar diplomats privately noted that these attendants for the medurr seemed like bipedal Earth beavers, albeit without the tail and with larger hands. Their large expressive eyes communicate much of their emotion and intent far more than their fur-covered muzzles and faces.

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03

Appendix One

Pafal Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 1
ERAPK: G2/R1/A2/F3/H2
Notes: Any medurr holdings
Encounter Chance: Probable
Group Size: 4-24 (4d6)
Organization: Conquered slave species; tribal society
Niche: Omnivore
Intelligence: Sentient

Pafal Game Data

Note: These statistics reflect a typical slave pafal living and working in the Casorian colony. Just as with humans, most pafal are not here-class characters and should use these stats.

STR 10	(d8+6)	INT 8	(d4+6)
DEX 8	(d6+6)	WIL 10	(d4+8)
CON 8	(d8+4)	PER 8	(d6+6)

Durability: 8/8/4/2 Action check: 9+/8/4/2
 Move: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4 #Actions: 2
 Reaction score: Marginal/1 Last resorts: 1

Attacks

Melee: 10/5/2 #4s/d4+1s/d6w LL/Q

Defenses

no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 no INT resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 no WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
Armor: none (LL), none (HL), none (EN)

Skills

Athletics [10]-**throw** [11], **Unarmed Attack** [10], **Primitive Ranged Weapon** [8]-**sling** [9], **Stealth** [8]-**hide** [9], **Movement** [8]-**race** [9], **Stamina** [8]-**endurance** [9], **Administration** [10], **Awareness** [10]-**intuition** [11], **Culture** [8]-**imperium oblique** [10].

Encounter. Long conquered and oppressed by the medurr, pafal have only one universal conditioned response to all beings, bow and never meet another being's eyes. These small fur-covered creatures seem most comfortable when they are not noticed. They are bred and trained to serve at any task their minds can grasp, and they approach all encounters by trying to please the person with whom they meet. Only rarely do pafal act aggressive or adversarial, and usually this occurs only among fellow slaves.

Those pafal who resist medurr rule or seek to escape from bondage are rare and exceptional, but they present a more realistic response range than resigned pafal. The only natural attack of a pafal is its bite, and the only thing that limits the damage of its razor teeth is the size of its mouth. Attacking pafal also use their size and unexpected strength to their advantages in melee combat



(+1 step penalty to hit a pafal if the supporting cast member is 2 meters or taller). After escaping beyond melee range, pafal can use any ranged weapons, though they suffer a +1 step penalty to hit with them unless the weapons are custom-crafted for their odd-shaped hands and short arms.

Habitat Society What humanity sees in the Verge is hardly the true habitat or society representative of pafal lifestyle. Originally, the pafal were a simple species at Progress Level 4, having only recently discovered internal combustion engines and mechanized farming. When the medurr swarmed over their moon, they could not resist, and found themselves turned into slaves and harshly thrust out into space by the medurr. They do their best to serve as cooks, porters, attendants, valets, weapons-polishers, to name a few of their menial jobs.

Once a pafal learns to trust a character, the initial reactions of them being weak and timid creatures vanish. Their culture retains a strong base of verbal history and storytelling. Humanity knows little of their mythologies and histories, but many humans hope to learn far more about the pafal species. Pafal do not accept their fate like the dhamrin. They with any trusted meddurr to help them escape, though they rarely sit back and wait for aid. More pafal die as a result of trying to escape than any other reason. While this drive to be free ennobles them, their willfulness remains private due to conditioning and a reluctance to fully commit to open rebellion.

APPENDIX TWO: PETS

Over the course of this journal I have gone to great effort to record as much information as I could about the various plants and animals of the Verge. Last night, however, it dawned on me that I was overlooking a whole category of creature.

In every human culture, some animals have won their place in society. This process began in prehistoric times, with the domestication of the dog and cat on ancient Earth. The passage of countless years has not lessened humankind's desire for animal companions. Indeed, the discovery of new creatures on the worlds of distant stars has served only to provide men and women with a greater assortment of pets, companions, and livestock. —AV, CSS

Since the beginning of recorded history, humanity has domesticated animals. Humans raised some of these animals for slaughter to supply much-needed meat. Others were kept for their useful byproducts, such as eggs or wool. Humans kept a select few, however, simply for the pleasure of their company. When humankind left behind the green hills of Earth, they took many of these animals with them to the stars.

Some of the most commonly encountered domesticated animals in human space are described in this section. Some of these creatures are natives of Earth while others have been picked up from the countless worlds humankind has visited. In addition, this section contains some information detailing pets kept by intelligent species who share the stars with humankind.



Appendix Two

For the most part, these creatures can use the generic game statistics presented above. Gamemasters should feel free to vary the statistics as needed to suit the environment that the creature grew up in or adjust them slightly to create a pet with its own quirky characteristics. In addition, use the animals presented in Chapter 17 *Creatures & Aliens* in the *ALTERNITY Gamemaster Guide* as guidelines for further variations. When important differences exist in the descriptions below, these are discussed in the text. In the end, these common animals are included here not because they pose a danger, but because they quite simply detail another facet of life in the 26th century for players and Gamemasters alike.

Aeleoli

The aeleoli is an amphibian kept as a pet by many sesheyen households. Although easily mistaken for a snake, a closer look reveals that these 2-meter-long animals have hundreds of legs beneath them. The tip of an aeleoli's body ends in an organ similar to those found in the electric eel, fish, and rays on Earth. The creature can defend itself if threatened either by either running an indirect charge over the whole surface of its body or bringing its tail into direct contact with an enemy.

Exactly why the sesheyen find the aeleoli pleasing is difficult for the average human to understand. Indeed, if they are asked directly why they keep these animals as pets, they answer in a vague manner with responses ranging from "We always have and we always will" to "I don't know, we just do."

When examined scientifically, however, a clear answer to this question evolves. The common aeleoli has a very active electrical field surrounding its body at all times. This is due almost entirely to the presence of the electrical cells found in their tails. This trickle of energy, which is so faint that human skin provides complete insulation from it, stimulates the sesheyen brain in much the same way that caffeine and other stimulants affect humans.

The aeleoli feeds on fish and other sea life that it shocks to death with its powerful electrical fields. In the wild, these animals hunt in packs like wolves. Once domesticated, they use these natural instincts in the service of their keepers. A typical aeleoli fisherman sends as many as a dozen of these creatures into the water where he believes fish to be hiding. They form a loose ring around the fish and fill the water with electricity.

Cat

Historians believe that the people of Earth's ancient Africa and Egypt tamed the cat, one of the oldest known domesticated animals. Although cats served initially to protect grain stores from vermin, they quickly won the hearts of their keepers and became pampered pets.

Several thousand breeds of cat are found in the 26th century. Some of these breeds evolved naturally or were the products of cross breeding. Others have been genetically engineered and are unlike anything ever encountered in the wild. No matter what their origins, all cats possess natural agility and many have long tails that further improve their balance. Their retractable claws are very versatile, enabling them to run swiftly, climb with great alacrity

and defend themselves when attacked. They have keen senses and retain many of the behavioral characteristics of their wild ancestors.

When hunting, cats depend primarily on their bite, although they use their front claws to wound or pin down prey. When defending themselves against larger animals they grab onto an enemy with teeth and claws to rake with their powerful hind legs.

Dog

Another of humanity's oldest and most beloved companions is the domesticated dog. They are commonly depicted in primitive cave paintings. Historians believe that humans originally domesticated these animals to help them with hunting, herding, or guarding. In time, humans trained them to perform tricks, used them as guide dogs for the blind, and employed them for tracking.

Several thousand breeds of dogs exist in the 26th century. Some of these are naturally evolved, wild dogs, wolves, and foxes once lived across most of the Earth. In time, controlled breeding and genetic engineering brought forth breeds that one could never find in nature.

The natural territoriality of the dog also makes them excellent guard animals. Given their hunting instincts, trainers can teach dogs to serve as very formidable combatants. Dogs depend primarily on their bite when they attack, for their nonretractable claws tend to be blunted by abrasion.

The games statistics presented here are for a mid-sized dog. Larger animals (such as guard or attack dogs) inflict more damage and have greater durability.

Elek

The elek is a common pet kept by the fraal. The fraal brought it with them to Earth from wherever they came from, and it presumably has a history of involvement with fraal civilization. Despite its unusual appearance, the elek is becoming a popular pet with nonfraal Mindwalkers because of its natural mental abilities.

The elek is a small animal, looking rather like a soft-bodied horseshoe crab. The natural texture of the animal's back makes it look uncomfortably like a human brain. A ring of light-sensitive spots surrounds the elek's body, although the animal is essentially blind. A slender tail trickles out behind the elek, making up about half of the animal's 35 or so centimeters. Viewed from beneath, the creature's

Pet Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I

Environment: Class I

GRAF: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Habitat: Urban settings

Encounter Chance: Probable

Group Size: Varies, usually 1-4 (d4)

Organization: Varies

Niche: Varies, usually omnivore

Intelligence: High-order animal

Appendix Two

Pet Game Data

STR 2	(d6/2)	INT 4	(d4+2)
DEX 10	(2d6+2)	WIL 4	(d4+2)
CON 2	(d6/2)	PER 4	(d4+2)
Durability: 2/2/1/1		Action check: 10/5/2	
Move: run 16		#Actions: 1	
Reaction score: Ordinary/1			

Attacks

Antech:

Shock (indirect) 8/4/2 d4s/d6s/d8s Ew/D

Shock (direct) 12/6/3 d6s/d8s/d4w Ew/D

Cat:

Claw/Bite/Rake 10/5/2 d4-2s/d4-1s/d4-1w LI/D

Dog:

Bite 10/5/2 d4-1s/d4s/d4-1w LI/D

Elek:

Mind blast 12/6/3 d4s/d6s/d8s Ew/D

Gearwerk:

Assorted tools 8/4/2 d4-1s/d4s/d4-1w LI/D

Maw:

Claw/Bite 12/6/3 d4s/d4w/d4+1w LI/D

Jay-bee:

Bite 12/6/3 d4s/d4w/d4+1w LI/D

Claws (x2) 12/6/3 d4s/d4-1w/d4w LI/D

Lurks:

Bite 8/4/2 d4-2s/d4-1s/d4s LI/D

Mite:

Bite 8/3/2 d4-3s/d4-2w/d4-1s LI/D

Rat:

Bite 12/6/3 d4s/d4w/d4+1w LI/D

Claws (x2) 12/6/3 d4s/d4-1w/d4w LI/D

Defenses

-2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: axes (LI), none (HI), none (EN)

Skills

Cat: Athletics [10]-climb [12], jump [12], Unarmed Attack [10], Acrobatics [10]-fall [11], Stealth [10]-hide [11], sneak [11], Awareness [10]-intuition [11], perception [11].

Dog: Athletics [10]-jump [12], Unarmed Attack [10], Stamina [10], Awareness [10]-perception [11].

Elek: Stealth [5]-hide [11], sneak [11], Stamina [10]-resist pain [12], Awareness [10]-intuition [15].

Gearwerk: Manipulation [11], Stamina [11], Awareness [11], Resilience [11], all other skills [11].

Maw: Unarmed Attack [10], Awareness [12]-intuition [14], perception [14].

Jay-Bee: Athletics [12]-jump [14], Unarmed Attack [10], Movement [12]-race [14].

Lurks: Athletics [12]-climb [14], jump [14], throw [14], Unarmed Attack [12], Acrobatics [12]-dodge [14], Manipulation [12]-lockpick [14], pickpocket [14], Stealth [12]-hide [14], sneak [14].

Mite: Unarmed Attack [10].

Rat: Athletics [12]-jump [14], Unarmed Attack [10], Movement [12]-race [14].

dozen pairs of legs put one in mind of a centipede or similar insect.

A relaxing elek gives off psionic vibrations that most Mind-walkers find pleasant. Some consider the vibrations akin to the relaxing effect some experience when a cat purrs. If the animal feels threatened, it can lash out mentally, stunning its attacker while the naturally timid elek scurries off in search of shelter.

Gearwerk

As might be guessed from its name, the gearwerk is a common companion of mecha characters. Although not an organic creature, per se, it is wrong to call the thing a machine. Because of this, many who do not understand the nature of gearwerk think of them as robotic assistants.

Modern gearwerk begin their lives as pollywoglike creatures grown in breeding vats. Although they are certainly organic at this stage, they cannot survive outside of the fluid baths in which they dwell.

When would-be owners decide to purchase a gearwerk, they visit a breeder and indicate the exact characteristics their new pet must have. Through a series of cybernetic implants, the gearwerk

is given the desired characteristics. For example, a mecha who serves as the engineer on a starship might purchase a gearwerk with cybernetic tools and implants that allow the creature to assist him or her perform work-related tasks. Breeders include among these modifications an extensive life support mechanism that allows the creature to survive outside of the breeding vat.

The characteristics of individual gearwerks vary greatly as breeders can engineer them to undertake many tasks. While the typical gearwerk is not outfitted with any manner of weapon, they are sometimes equipped with tools that they can employ for self-defense. In rare occasions, of course, some breeders incorporate weapons and even armor in gearwerk. Such creatures are often employed by the mecha in much the same way that humans might use a guard or attack dog.

Because of the many roles they are engineered to fill, it is impossible to give a detailed description of the gearwerk. In general, however, the mechanical body of the creature resembles a long-jointed, five-legged spider. At the nexus of its legs is a carriage built around the tadpolelike body. A number of thin, organic tendrils (usually two) sprout from the fleshy part of the body. Although not as nimble as hands, these serve the creature well.

Appendix Two

Hawk

Humans have domesticated the hawk and similar birds of prey for many centuries, most often training them to hunt for small animals and other birds. Their keen eyes and sharp talons make them deadly predators, while their natural beauty and grace have won many a heart.

The game statistics given can serve for hawks and raptors as well. Obviously, of course, the movement rate would be for flying, not running.

The amazing natural eyesight of the hawk enables them to spot even small objects at great distances. While this makes them excellent natural hunters, it also has other uses. For example, a trainer can train a hawk to swoop down and snatch up keys or even attack the hand of someone holding a pistol.

Jay-boo

The jay-boo is a small, reptilian creature similar in many ways to the dinosaurs of Earth's late Cretaceous period. Although smaller than their terrestrial cousins (generally standing only a meter tall), they are nimble, slender creatures with needlelike teeth and wickedly sharp talons on their hind legs.

Jay-boo have long, slender necks with angular heads and large, black eyes. They often seem nervous and jittery to humans, darting their gaze back and forth as if constantly searching for prey.

Although the 'sa domesticated these creatures when they were still in their stone age, they have never bred the aggressive, hunting instincts out of these carnivores. As such, the typical jay-boo is as much a guard animal as it is a pet. In combat, they attempt to bite first and, if they score a hit, follow up by raking with their rear claws.

Although popular among the 'sa, the jay-boo has never caught on with other species. They are skittish and tend to bite or nip even their keepers. Because they are strongly territorial, they act very aggressively when strangers approach. Only on Austrin-Untis colonies can one find human beings keeping jay-boo as pets.

Lurla

The lurla is a small animal that looks rather like a three-tailed monkey. Known for their curiosity and affectionate natures, these tawny-furred animals were originally domesticated by the weren. They have bright, intelligent eyes and over-developed jaws that look rather like the beak of a parrot or similar bird. Lurla are playful and energetic creatures that like to climb and leap about. Their arboreal heritage is obvious from the way in which they use their tails for both balance and as an extra hand.

Because of their friendly, playful nature, these animals have become popular as pets among other species as well. Both human and fraal find the lurla a pleasant companion, and they are beginning to grow on the 'sa as well.

Various historians and xenobiologists believe that the weren trained these natural herbivores to go out into the forests and gather fruit for them. Before too long, this natural tendency to gather small objects quickly and efficiently won them other roles as well. Weren could show a well-trained lurla a replica of some important object

(like a valuable necklace) and send it into a building to recover it. Lurla are very intelligent and can be trained to do simple tasks. For some reason, they possess a natural talent at picking locks (although they must receive training to get the general idea across).

Lurla are frequently kept as pets and companions for weren children. In this role, the weren adults and children often teach them to play simple games, the most common of which are catch, hide-and-seek, and fetch.

As herbivores, lurla lack any real fighting ability. They can bite, although they seldom do any real harm when attacking in this fashion. As a rule, the lurla's reaction to any threat is to flee as fast as possible, generally trying to scamper up into a tree or otherwise gain altitude at the same time.

Mite

Despite its common name, the mite is no relation to terrestrial insects or arachnids. The mite is a ten-legged crustacean originally found on the rocky coasts of Theodolus, a minor world some thirty-five light-years from Sol. Because of their voracious appetite for insects and other small pests, mites quickly became a part of every Theodolian household. Over the centuries since their first discovery, mites have spread throughout human space in the company of many star travelers.

Physically, the mite's body resembles that of a terrestrial crab. A hard exoskeleton provides it with d4-1 armor against low impact attacks. At the tip of the creature's heart-shaped body is the head, with its four eyes and constantly churning feeding tendrils. It captures food with its pair of grasping claws and stuffs it into its maw, where numerous moving parts grind it quickly.

On the average, an adult mite weighs between 3 and 5 kilograms. They can live for as long as fifteen years and are quite neat once housebroken. Mites are cold-blooded creatures that find the warmth of the human body very pleasant, which has often caused them to creep into bed with any nearby human and scare him or her. A sleeping mite often gives off a faint thrumming sound caused by the reflexive clicking of its legs against its carapace.

Rat

Not every animal to reach the stars was exported from Earth voluntarily. Almost as soon as humankind established their first extra-solar colonies, so too did rats and mice found their own settlements. Rats, as well as their cousins, mice, are sometimes kept as pets. More often, however, these creatures act as nuisances by feeding on grain or just about anything else they can get at.

On Earth, mice and rats were the second most populous form of mammal. This almost certainly still holds true in the heart of Old Space, within the stars ruled by Sol. Further out, although people encounter them less frequently, they exist in great numbers on many colony worlds.

The reason for this is simple adaptability. Not only can rats find food almost anywhere, but they can adjust to a wide range of climates and conditions. Even where local predators might feed on the rat, it breeds so rapidly that no hunter seems voracious enough to keep these animals completely in check.

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Aliens Grouped by Intelligence and Biochemistry

Nonintelligent: grabber grass, haze colony, lightning anemone, moss, mortar tree, star pod, streamer

Low-order animal: dancing spider, kenjir sak flies, man o' war, rock mantis, xim-xir

High-order animal: aeleoli, argent, brrowl, cambryonyx, cat, chanar, chord, crow eagle, dhros, dog, elk, gearwerk, gilded floater, great tudd, hawk, jay-hoo, jazelle, kittete, lurla, mhwada, mite, moor rats, nanofury, nanomutant A, nanomutant B, prenapar, rat, ravager, razorjaw, rhelaur, sky fisher, spitfire, tagger

Subsentient: nanale

Sentient: ko-fam-att, sturmer, medurr, dhamrin, pafal

Series I: argent, brrowl, chanar, chord, crow eagle, dancing spider, dhros, edanwe, gilded floater, great tudd, haze colony, jazelle, kenjir sak flies, kittete, ko-fam-att, lightning anemone, man o' war, mhwada, moor rat, mortar tree, moss, nanale, nanofury, nanomutant A, nanomutant B, pafal, prenapar, razorjaw, ravager, rhelaur, ripper weed, rock mantis, sky fisher, spitfire, sturmer, tagger, xim-xir

Series VII: streamer, soap bubble, star pod, mote swarm



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